

SOLDIERS,
CITIZENS
& THE
SYMBOLS
of WAR

*From
Classical Greece
to Republican Rome,
500–167 B.C.*

ANTONIO
SANTOSUOSSO

Soldiers, Citizens, and the Symbols of War

HISTORY AND WARFARE

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*From Classical Greece
to Republican Rome,
500–167 B.C.*

Antonio Santosuosso
The University of Western Ontario



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For Alma with love

History and Warfare

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Acknowledgments

From my earliest days, I breathed ancient history. Born in an ancient hill-town that was once home to the fiercest enemies of Rome, the Samnites, I was surrounded by living remains of the past. Nine ferocious years of Latin and five years of Greek at the Liceo Classico and later at the university strengthened my interest in antiquity. The immediate reason for my return to ancient Greece and Italy, after years of teaching and writing on the Renaissance and modern Italy, was a very popular course on ancient warfare that I introduced at the University of Western Ontario.

This book has grown out of that course. It is intended to enrich the education of my students and to appeal to the knowledgeable general reader with an interest in ancient or military history. The classicist too, I hope, may find my work of value, for I believe it offers a fresh look at key moments in the military history of the ancient world. Moreover, I have tried to bring together themes usually treated in isolation—the mechanics of the battlefield, society, politics, and symbolism. My main sources have been the voice of the past (as understood through the literary, artistic, and archaeological evidence of the ancient world) and secondary works of recent years (primarily those of English, Italian, French, Spanish, and German scholars). I have used the primary sources most easily available in translation since I felt that a philological approach was not appropriate to my intended audience and to the type of synthesis I have attempted to achieve. In my endnotes, I have indicated only the main secondary sources on which I have relied for a particular type of evidence. The reader should consult the bibliography at the end of the book for a more extensive list of the sources consulted.

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Antonio Santosuosso

Introduction

This book is an attempt to relate various aspects of the waging of war from the fifth to the middle of the second century B.C., that is, from classical Greece to the Third Macedonian War of Republican Rome. In the pages ahead, I will analyze a number of interrelated matters: how the tactical and strategic concepts of warfare changed during this period; why the West, understood as Greece, Macedonia, or Rome, triumphed over the East, understood as Persians or Carthaginians; how the role of warrior related to the role of citizen; and finally, how the symbols and propaganda stemming from war expressed and promoted society's values.

The hoplites dominated the battlefields of classical Greece. They were the backbone of the Great Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.) and of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.). The hoplite system was the perfect expression of the agricultural societies of the period. Simple and effective, it placed the safety of the collective entity over that of the individual. For example, the hoplite was armed with a long spear and a large shield, weapons that were effective only if used to protect the whole line of soldiers. Other patterns typified the hoplite system of that age: the long line in which each man stood next to his neighbor; the rather simple motion of moving straight ahead over flat terrain; the military canon of dividing the army in three sectors (right wing, center, and left wing); the tactic of posting strength (the right wing) against weakness (the left); the fact that casualties were modest because the warriors, heavily armored and not permitted to leave their line, could not pursue their enemies effectively; and the unwritten rule that one large pitched battle should decide the war.

The hoplite system met its first great challenge in 490 B.C. when the time came for the Greeks to fend off the Persians, invaders from across the sea and men who took a quite different approach to war. The bow and the horse were supreme among them. The Persian invasion was not unexpected. It was, in part, a matter of revenge for the Persians, for the Athenians and Erethrians had helped the Greeks on the western seaboard of Asia Minor in the fight against the Persians. And it was also a matter of policy,

for the Persians had been directing their attention across the Hellespont into continental Europe ever since the last two decades of the sixth century.

Ultimately, all the Persian invasion plans would end in failure. In 492 B.C., the caprices of the weather destroyed most of the Persian fleet while it was moving southward from northern Greece. Two years later, a combination of strategic and tactical mistakes, together with the logistic weakness of the Persian supply line, doomed the expedition to failure on the plains of Marathon. In 480, the Persians brought together the largest army the world had ever seen, but the final result, after dramatic highs and lows for both contestants, was the same: defeat both in the bloody waters off Salamis and on the land near Plataea.

The defeat of the Persians opened a period of Athenian supremacy over the rest of Greece, but Sparta, potentially Hellas's strongest military state, could not accept the situation indefinitely. The second half of the fifth century would see Athens and Sparta and their allies continuously pitted against each other, with the Spartans eventually triumphant. But soon after, another contender for hegemony over Hellas came to the fore—Thebes. The confrontation that ensued ended with a Theban victory over the Spartans, who were defeated at Leuctra (in 371 B.C.) and at Mantinea (in 362 B.C.). The most important development of the century following the Great Persian Wars was, however, the challenge brought to the hoplite system by an increasing use of mercenaries and by the introduction of peltasts and light infantry. Both groups tended to challenge the traditional concept of the citizen-soldier. Both mercenaries and the peltasts and light infantrymen could be essential under certain conditions, such as those encountered at Sphacteria in 425 B.C. and in the confrontation near Corinth in 390 B.C. Yet in the end, when the outcome mattered most, the conservatism inherent in most military matters prevailed: The great battles of the period would primarily pit hoplite against hoplite.

The battles at Leuctra and Mantinea also foreshadowed the future in other ways. At Leuctra, the cavalry played an important role, and at Mantinea, light infantry and cavalry troops pinned the Spartan left, making victory possible. Moreover, the Theban general Epaminondas showed that the once rigid canon of the hoplite system could be altered by attacking *en echelon*, placing strength against strength, and enhancing the depth of the formation.

The lessons that the two battles provided were exploited not in Greece proper but in a state lying at the margins of Greek civilization, Macedonia. Macedonia was different from most of Greece. It had more resources, a king, an aristocracy, and a ruling group that had developed along ethnic lines. Philip II united all these elements to create a great and different army. A society structured along aristocratic lines could support a strong cavalry, and a society based on ethnic primacy could also maintain a primary role for the infantry. With the addition of new technological and tactical devel-

opments—a long spear (the *sarissa*) about twice the length of the hoplite spear, less armor, a subtle integration of mercenaries and allies and of cavalry, heavy troops, and light troops—and finally, with the strength of a charismatic leader like Alexander, the army that took the field for Macedonia was the strongest force that the world had ever seen. The people of Hellas became the aggressors and ultimately subjugated their Persian foes.

The states that emerged after Alexander retained most of his military innovations, though the cavalry was much reduced. Yet the future lay not in the East but in the West. There, by the third century B.C. and after almost five hundred years of relentless and not always successful warring, Rome emerged as the most powerful regional player. Roman military roots must have come from Greece, whether through contact with the Greeks settled in southern Italy, Magna Graecia, or through the Etruscans, but by the third century, Rome's military institutions had changed considerably. The Romans still fought in a phalanx formation, but it was not the rigid phalanx of the Greeks or of the Hellenistic Successors; rather, it was, as Hans Delbrück wrote long ago, a phalanx with joints.¹ The armor, weapons, and deployment were different as well. Moreover, Roman society was able to recruit large numbers of soldiers, and because the society could absorb enormous casualty rates, a single encounter would not necessarily decide a war, as had normally been the case in the past.

The Roman confrontation with the heirs of Alexander was inevitable. After defeating the various phalanxes in the second century fairly easily, Rome could claim that the future belonged not to the army of Alexander but to the Roman legion. But history would show that the true heir of Alexander was not Philip V, who fought at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C., or Perseus, who fought at Pydna in 168 B.C. (both were routed by the Romans), but the Carthaginian general Hannibal. His invasion of Italy during the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.) showed that he had mastered the lessons of Alexander. The Carthaginian army was mobile, with 5 foot soldiers to every horseman by the time Hannibal arrived on the plains of northern Italy. He also commanded a large variety of troop types—heavy, light, and, like Alexander, a few missile units as well.

Rome was brought to the brink of disaster with momentous defeats at the Trebia River, Trasimene Lake, and Cannae, leaving thousands of soldiers on the battlefield. But it is a testimonial to Roman resiliency that the three great defeats did not force the Romans to surrender. In fact, as the war continued, the momentum began to shift to the Roman side—in part because of the structure of Roman society, in part because of Hannibal's strategic weakness, and in part because of the Roman attitude to war. In the end, having learned by bitter experience the lessons given by Hannibal on the battlefield, the great general Scipio would bring victory to the Romans. Indeed, he would ultimately rout his unwitting tutor Hannibal and, in a sense, the Hellenistic system of warfare on the field of Zama in 202 B.C.

War was inextricably tied to the social structure of classical Greece, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and Republican Rome. Hoplite warfare reflected the classes who owned the state both socially and politically. The poor were excluded from service, and the role played by the rich was reduced. Instead, the citizen was glorified. Foreigners or members of the lower class were enlisted only in emergencies, for a limited period, and usually in rather “menial” roles. But with the Peloponnesian War, all this began to change. As the battlefield moved to distant theaters, as the terms of service grew longer, and as soldiers faced the challenges of unusual terrain, a new breed of combatants arrived on the scene: the mercenary or noncitizen soldier and the light infantryman or nonhoplite. Although the people who owned the state—the hoplites—decided the great confrontations of the age following the Peloponnesian conflict, nevertheless the battles of Leuctra and Mantinea marked the end of the citizen-warrior.

The Macedonians also assumed that those who owned the state would manage, stage, and fight its wars. But the Macedonian war machine was more complex than that of its predecessors. It is best visualized as a pyramid, in which the parameters of differentiation were class and ethnic background. At the top of the pyramid was the cavalry, the Macedonian aristocracy. Just beneath were the Macedonian hoplites—the phalangites. Armed with *sarissae* and clad in less armor than their forerunners, the footmen were still a crucial part of the army. But the egalitarianism of the original hoplite phalanx had disappeared by this time. The presence of an authoritarian ruler—the king—fostered a system of military differentiation even among the ethnic Macedonians. All of them owned the state after the king, but the middling elements owned much less than the portion possessed by the aristocracy. The lower levels of the pyramid were occupied by three other distinct groups—mercenaries, light infantrymen, and subject people who fought essentially for financial rewards, rather than for the defense of their *polis*, their land, and their families.

The close connection between social status and military role was also the main feature of the army of Republican Rome. Roman society was not dominated by the middle classes, like the Greek *poleis*, or by one class, the aristocracy, like Macedonia. Eventually, the Roman aristocracy had to share power with the commoners. The result was the legion, which any citizen owning a certain amount of property could join. Now, the footman was again king of the battlefield, but the aristocrats who provided leadership fought next to him. (People with less than a certain amount of property were excluded from the legion.) Both common soldiers and their leaders shared similar goals—material rewards, honors (permanent among the leadership and temporary among the commoner), and a socially approved opportunity to express the brutality that seemed to typify Roman society at the time.²

There is no better example of war as a social organism than the war waged by ancient Romans. For them, war not only reflected their main social values but also served as a means to secure prosperity and peace. War fulfilled a psychological need to use violence and brutality in a legitimate way, and at the same time, it allowed the Romans to attain enrichment and power. Over time, success on the battlefields would widen the gap between nobles and commoners in Roman society, straining the social fabric. Yet at least initially, war also relieved societal tensions. This was, in part, because the army was an agent of social mobility (the person who rose to the rank of centurion could hope for better social status for himself and his family). Furthermore, the founding of new colonies in conquered territories alleviated the poverty of many Roman citizens, who were granted lands in the conquered areas. This process provided a double benefit: It moved to the periphery people who may have played a subversive role had they stayed near Rome, and it made the lower classes partners with the aristocracy in sharing the spoils of war. War also enabled Rome to keep the newly conquered Italic people in line. The Romans usually supported the primacy of the native aristocracy in the newly conquered states, but at the same time, they brought members of other sectors of the subject population into the always ongoing conflict with newfound enemies of the republic. In this manner, the Italic people, just like Roman citizens themselves, reaped the economic benefits of a victorious and powerful state.³

War reflected all the major values of society in a complex set of symbols. There is probably no better example of this than the way the victories over the Persians were marshaled in classical Greece both to support the supremacy of Athens over the rest of Greece and to justify portraying the Persians as inferior. Marathon became the symbol of Athens's fight for the freedom of Hellas as a whole. The Persians were depicted with all the derogatory characteristics of a "lower" race. Although the Persians may well have been handsome, big, and well proportioned, as Hippocrates claimed,⁴ the Athenians described them as weak, debauched, corrupted, and corrupting; they were said to be ready to accept political subjection and were criticized for using an inferior weapon like the bow and being unable to fight as a collective entity. In a similar manner, victorious Romans would depict the people of Carthage, an eastern power settled in North Africa, as perfidious, treacherous, morally flawed, and impious. It did not matter that Rome would make use of the same ruses for which the Carthaginians were despised and feared. The fact remained that the winners—in this case, the Romans—were said to have kept their sense of fair play and justice, and the defeated were attacked for failing to obey the laws of war.

As Edward Said says of Aeschylus's view of the battle of Salamis in the play *Persae*, "Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia, that hostile 'other' world

across the sea.”⁵ In other words, Greece would set the negative pattern that would become part of Western tradition. It is no surprise that, as Edith Hall says, the gender opposition that posited Greeks as male and Easterners as female was a predominant feature of the East-West confrontation.⁶ And it is not surprising that Rome would inherit this attitude, casting Carthage (Dido) in a female role and Rome (Aeneas) in a male role. The West stood as the symbol of whatever was right, just, sane, strong, and frugal; the East, by contrast, was seen as perfidious, sexually dangerous, and ready to submit to rape by the West.

The negative symbolism could, of course, be applied to any enemy, domestic or foreign. Consider Epaminondas's clever portrayal of the Spartans on the eve of the battle of Leuctra. When the armor of Heracles disappeared from the temple in Thebes, Epaminondas declared this was not a bad omen. Rather, he said, Heracles himself had taken his armor to use in his struggle against the impious, sacrilegious Spartans. The Spartans were going to fight, Epaminondas told his men, on land that was cursed for them because they had raped two Theban virgins on that very battlefield.⁷ Consequently, victory could not but be with the Thebans—the people who respected the gods, whom the gods loved in turn, and for whom the gods fought.

Success in war also brought fundamental changes in the nature of kingship. A victorious conqueror was considered a favorite of the gods; he was not just a hero but a person endowed with divine characteristics—a semi-god or even a god himself. This was the message that Alexander tried to force upon his Macedonians in the aftermath of the Persian Empire's conquest. The Macedonians opposed the transition of their king from hero to god,⁸ but it marked the beginning of a trend that most of Alexander's Successors were able to enforce. The Romans too adopted this belief, but for them, it was accompanied by other important changes.⁹ For example, they combined a fundamental concept of rule in Roman society—that the gods favored a just, obedient commonwealth and its magistrates—with the idea that great kings and heroes become gods after death, an idea first articulated by the early-third-century Greek writer Euhemerus. For the Romans, an exceptional magistrate like Scipio Africanus became a spokesman of the gods during his tenure in office and throughout his lifetime. The outgrowth of this was the concept of the *imperator*, a title first granted to Scipio by his soldiers in Spain. The title at the time had a religious significance. It was believed to bring the title-holder closer to the father of the gods, Jupiter. Eventually, this concept would be exploited first by Marius and Sulla, and then by Caesar, Augustus, and the later emperors.

Chapter One

Close Array and Pointed Spears

The Ways of the Greek Phalanx

Queen:

Does their [the Greeks']
prowess show itself in
archer combat, using bows?

Chorus:

Not at all. They stand and
fight in close array with
shield and spear.

—Aeschylus, *Persae* 239–240

War Among the Greeks

According to J. Harmand, at least five different types of armed conflict characterized the ancient world: invasions of a more civilized state by a primitive opponent; raids by small groups of armed individuals against more advanced neighbors; wars between states belonging to the same ethnic group; civil wars, that is, conflicts between people belonging to the same state; and imperialistic wars (usually the imperialistic power was at the same level or higher than the opponents in terms of civilization).¹

The pattern of conflict during the Greek classical period (c. 500–338 B.C.) fits Harmand's model. At times, imperialistic confrontations took center stage, such as the Persian invasion in the early part of the fifth century B.C. But at least as important were the wars that pitted one Greek state against another—Athens against Thebes or Sparta, for example, or Sparta against Athens and then against Thebes. To be sure, the threat of invasion

by less civilized people and raids on Greece's northern frontier persisted, and civil conflict did occur. However, such conflicts never matched the intensity of the confrontations waged either for political survival against an imperialistic power or in an attempt to avoid exploitation by a strong neighbor who spoke the same tongue and boasted of similar ethnic origins.

How many individuals a society can spare for its wars is always dependent on the productivity of its people. In general, the tendency has been to keep at home those who work and to send to the battlefield those who do not perform significant duties within the state's economy. This did not necessarily mean that the soldier was unemployed or unemployable. In fact, in ancient Greece and the rest of the ancient world, the warrior was normally either a person who exploited the labor of the rest of society or an individual who relied on his own means for economic survival. Low productivity methods and the assumption that war was the privilege of the property owner meant that the "military society" of each community had "carefully defined limits."² In ancient Greece, where the population of each state was limited,³ this translated into small armies. Thus, for example, in an hour of extreme emergency at Marathon in 490 B.C., the Athenians and Plataeans were able to muster only some 10,000 men.⁴ At Leuctra in 371 B.C., the Spartans and Thebans deployed armies of 7,000 to 8,000 and 6,000, respectively.⁵ And at Chaeronea in 338 B.C.—the battle that decided the independence of the Greek states—the Greeks could deploy, in a moment of great collective peril, an army of just 35,000 men against the 32,000 soldiers of Philip of Macedon.⁶

The small size of these armies is explained only in part by the limited population. A more important factor was that "power [in the ancient world] was . . . derived from the use of force and could be maintained only by force."⁷ This meant that the practitioners of extreme violence, the soldiers, had to come either from the ruling classes or from groups that the ruling classes could easily control. In other words, war was the privilege of those whom the state could trust. Usually, this meant married landowners—men with immovable assets that could not be taken with them in the face of an advancing enemy and men who had to defend the chastity of their women and the freedom of their children.⁸

Actually, the ancient Greeks were even more specific on what the correlation between wealth and warrior status entailed. How much a man's property was worth had a direct bearing on the armament he was supposed to wear, on his position in the battle line, and on the type of function he was expected to perform when face to face with the enemy. In fifth-century Athens, for instance, the men with the greatest amount of property (those in the first class in the census) were responsible for manning the fleet. Members of the second class served in the cavalry, those in the third class were the hoplites, and men in the fourth class formed the light infantry.⁹

Aristophanes brilliantly depicts the war-weariness of Athenian society in his dramas—from the man in *Acharnians* who makes a private peace with the enemy to the ambassador in *Peace* who appeals directly to the gods to stop war to the women in *Lysistrata* who refuse sex to their husbands until the men put down their weapons. Yet being a soldier was a duty that no man of property could shirk, for it strengthened his social status and confirmed that the state belonged to him, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The hoplite phalanx, the battle formation characteristic of the classical period, was the perfect expression of Greek society in that era. Unlike Mesopotamian and Egyptian forces, the Greek armies were not centered on light infantry or chariotry. Although Homer's heroes arrived on chariots to meet the Trojans on the outskirts of Troy, the Greeks ordinarily did not use chariots in the manner of the ancient Middle East warrior. Chariots were not mobile platforms for archers or shock vehicles for spearmen; they simply took the warriors to and from the battlefield.¹⁰ Moreover, by the fifth century B.C., they had been relegated to use in athletic games. Cavalry too was used sparingly, for a number of reasons.¹¹ In the first place, Greek horses had no proper saddles and no horseshoes. Also, the stirrup had not been invented yet. Consequently, the cavalry could not be fully effective, especially since the terrain in most of Greece was hilly or at least rocky. Even in the best of physical situations, as in flat Thessaly, another serious consideration limited the use of horsemen—the cost of the mount and its upkeep. Finally, in most Greek states, a reliance on cavalry would have meant a return of the supremacy of the richest members in society, the very group that the middling classes of classical Greece had dispossessed in their rise to power. Light infantry too, at least in the initial stages of the Persian Wars, was disregarded for reasons that were partly tactical and partly social. This opened the way for the type of soldier that would dominate the battlefields of classical Greece—the heavy infantryman, who averaged around 1.68 meters in height and between 63 and 67.5 kilograms in weight.¹²

Weapons and Armor of the Hoplite

The Greek heavy infantryman was known as a hoplite. The name was derived from the word *hoplon*, a term equivalent to *weapon* but primarily used to identify a piece of armor that had a particular tactical and symbolic meaning for the Greeks—the shield. Spartan mothers told their sons to come back from battle either with their shields or on them;¹³ as every soldier knew, there was no greater disgrace than leaving the shield behind. Demaratus of Sparta could excuse those who threw away their helmets and breastplates because “they [wore] those for their own sakes,” but he could not excuse those who discarded their shields, for they carried shields “for the sake of the whole line.”¹⁴

Like the spears, shields were uniform in design but not necessarily identical in size. According to V. D. Hanson, this may have depended on the wearer's height or arm length, if he had bought the shield recently, or on the size of his ancestor who had first owned it.¹⁵ The normal diameter of the shield used in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. was about 91 centimeters. The shield protected the holder from knee to chin¹⁶ and was made of hardwood (such as oak) and covered with bronze or ox hide. The surface was first painted with individual symbols and later embellished with pictures identifying the holder's city—the letter lambda for Sparta, the club of Heracles for Thebes, and so on.¹⁷ But the most important feature of the shield was the way in which it was held. It had two brackets on the back—one (the *porpax*) in the center for the forearm and the other (the *antilabe*) near the rim to allow the hoplite's hand to hold the shield firmly in place. Moreover, the shield was made in such a way that the soldier could rest it on his shoulder while advancing—an especially important feature since the shield weighed about 8 kilograms.¹⁸

The covering worn over other clothes added between 3.5 and 6 kilograms of weight to the equipment of the hoplite—6 if he wore a bronze cuirass and 3.5 if he had a corselet made of linen or canvas.¹⁹ Compared to the heavy and expensive bronze cuirass, the linen corselet must have been the most popular armor of the time, given its pliability (it was about 0.5 centimeters thick²⁰) and modest cost. Moreover, its defensive capabilities could be strengthened by adding metal plates or scales.

For the groin area, protection was provided by leather strips so that movement was as easy as possible. The legs were protected by very thin bronze greaves, padded with linen, that could be either snapped or strapped in place.

The widespread use of the cuirass or corselet and the large, round shield (and especially the way it was held) set the Greek hoplite apart from the typical warrior of the ancient Near East. In addition, the fact that the hoplite routinely wore a helmet and the very shape of the helmet itself heightened the dissimilarity even further. In the fifth century, the most common helmets were the Illyrian version, which was open in the front, and the Corinthian version, which had a nose guard. Both were made of bronze and usually had crests of horsehair on top and padding in the interior to soften the impact of blows. The Corinthian helmet, stylistically very handsome, was initially the more popular of the two. Before the battle, it could be worn in a raised position, as shown in a famous bust of Pericles; when the fighting began, it gave excellent protection but made hearing practically impossible and severely limited visibility. The Illyrian helmet, by contrast, allowed good visibility and was less of an obstacle to proper hearing, but it provided less protection to its wearer.

The offensive weapons of the hoplite were the sword and the spear. There were two types of swords, both worn on the left: The straight sword (about

60 centimeters long or more) was used both for cutting and thrusting, and the slightly curved sword, with a single edge, was used for slashing.²¹ The sword, however, was a secondary weapon for the hoplite. His main weapon was the spear. Just as the shield defined him defensively, the spear defined the hoplite's offensive capabilities. In Aeschylus's *Persae*, members of the chorus describe the hoplites as "men famed for the spear,"²² and they long to know "whether Persians have won by drawing their bows/or the strength of the Greeks'/pointed spears has prevailed."²³

Unlike the short, javelin-like spear used by the Egyptians and Assyrians, the Greek spear was fairly long (between 2.1 and 2.4 meters²⁴). And with an iron head and an iron butt, it was also quite heavy (1.034 kilograms for a 2.2-meter spear²⁵). The Near Eastern spear was probably used both for throwing and thrusting, but because of its length and weight, the hoplite spear was suitable only for thrusting,²⁶ either in an underarm or, more likely, an overarm fashion.²⁷

Why and when the hoplite system became established in ancient Greece has been a matter of debate. Although a few scholars still maintain that the process began in the Dark Ages, most now agree that the system was introduced in the later half of the eighth century or by the middle of the seventh century B.C. The issue of why the system was established is much more controversial. Two main schools of thought have emerged. The gradualists maintain that the typical weapons of the hoplite, the shield and the heavy armor, developed over a fairly lengthy period and were not the result of a new class, the middling elements, coming to the fore.²⁸ Social historians argue instead that when the middling classes took power in the Greek cities, they forged the new weaponry to emphasize their cohesiveness and to differentiate themselves from the aristocratic groups that had been the dominant political element in the past.²⁹

Lately, two historians have tried to strike a middle ground. Hans Van Wees, starting from the gradualist position, has argued that the evolution of the hoplite system took more than two generations and that it was "underway but still incomplete" around 650 B.C. According to Van Wees, the process was marked by four distinct developments: The spear displaced the sword as the main weapon of combat; chariots gradually disappeared; heavy infantry became differentiated from light infantry (that is, missile units); and cooperation, coordination, and central leadership defined the battle line.³⁰ Victor Davis Hanson has presented a variation on the social history interpretation. Noting that both gradualists and social historians maintain that the "new battle tactics . . . followed the adoption of novel equipment,"³¹ Hanson points out that, in fact, the reverse was true: The tactics of the hoplite phalanx were developed before the complete hoplite panoply. Indeed, the various elements of the panoply, especially the concave shield, would have been awkward or even useless in situations that emphasized the individual, not the group. According to Hanson's theory, hoplite warfare was the prod-

uct of the radical changes that occurred in Greek agriculture after the first millennium. As small landholdings replaced the large farms owned by a few aristocratic families, a new class composed of small farmers emerged. And hoplite warfare was an outgrowth of the values of this new ruling class of small farmers. It emphasized and expressed their ideals.³²

The Hoplite in Battle

Once the soldiers had been recruited and armed, the first important job for the Greek commander was to choose an area suitable for battle. Terrain was a critical variable for warfare in the ancient world. Indeed, Polybius goes so far as to claim that a skillful adaptation of one's army to the terrain usually meant victory in battle,³³ and the Theban general Epaminondas would never attack an enemy who commanded a better position.³⁴ Although the prospect of action against an opponent holding the high ground was not always a deterrent, it is clear that "even a slight elevation in ground was advantageous in building up momentum."³⁵

But if holding the high ground was a desirable option in that regard, the most suitable type of terrain for hoplite warfare was flat. This was because the phalanx was most effective when moving straight ahead. Any deviation was fairly difficult; the fording of even a small stream, according to Aristotle,³⁶ could easily break the line and thus endanger the safety of the whole. This was one of the reasons why, if the attacker did not comply by pressing an enemy enjoying a better position, the opposing generals usually agreed to meet on flat terrain. "When they [the Greeks] have declared war against each other [says Mardonius to the Persian king Xerxes] they come down to the fairest and most level ground that they can find and there they fight."³⁷ It should be noted, however, that the "flat" terrain of ancient battles was often strewn with rocks, bushes, and even trees.³⁸

After choosing the terrain, the next task for the military commander was to deploy his army in the proper battle formation. The chorus's words in *Persae* give a clear image of the hoplites in battle line. They stood, Aeschylus's chorus says, in "close array with shield and spear."³⁹

The basic unit—whether Thucydides' *enomotia* (the smallest tactical unit of the Spartan army) of 24 hoplites in 4 files, 6 men deep,⁴⁰ or Xenophon's *enomotia* of 36 hoplites in 3 files, 12 men deep⁴¹—was essentially a small column. But once in battle array, with each *enomotia* next to another, the phalanx was essentially "a line formation with a width considerably greater than its depth."⁴²

The phalanx followed a more or less established protocol in terms of its depth and length. John Warry suggests that in the fifth century, it was the norm to deploy in 4 ranks.⁴³ The evidence, however, does not support his conclusion: Only two of twelve known cases list this depth.⁴⁴ As W. K.

Pritchett maintains, "A depth of 8 men, despite numerous 'exceptions' represented the *Urtiefe* of the Greek phalanx not only in the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C., but also in the army of Alexander."⁴⁵ A traditional pattern was also followed in the length of the phalanx, which was divided tactically into three main segments—right, center, and left.⁴⁶ It was customary, at least until Epaminondas turned the tables at Leuctra in 371 B.C., for the right wing to be the position of honor since the aim was for the right to defeat the enemy's left wing. Consequently, the right wing was where the general fought and where the best troops were placed. At Marathon, the right was assigned to Athenian troops;⁴⁷ at Plataea, it went to the Spartans.⁴⁸ The second most prestigious position was not the center but the left. After all, the troops on the left had to hold the enemy's right until their own right wing had burst through the enemy's line. At Marathon, the left was entrusted to the Plataeans,⁴⁹ and at Plataea, the Athenians formed the left wing and thus were second in prestige to the Spartans.⁵⁰

Two factors influencing the effectiveness of the phalanx were the bravery and skill of the front line and the support provided by the other ranks. The edge of the crisis was always at the front or the back. Therefore, the weakest troops were placed in the middle, "for in war one must put the best men in the van and the rear, and the worst in the center, so that they may be led by the van and driven forward by the rearguard."⁵¹ A commander could not afford to place men of uncertain morale in the front because a rout, once begun, was almost impossible to stop. A similar logic applied to the rear ranks, who were as crucial as the first. Soldiers in the rear had to push the men in the middle to move forward to the edge of the crisis when the front ranks fell, and they had to act as a barrier to prevent reluctant soldiers from fleeing altogether.⁵²

In the first great conflict of the classical period, the encounter of Marathon in 490 B.C. in which the Athenians and Plataeans fought the Persians, our main source, Herodotus, makes no mention of Greek light infantry. Yet Pausanias's statement that "slaves fought then [at Marathon] for the first time by the side of their masters"⁵³ suggests that slaves too had some military function. The meaning of Pausanias's statement is uncertain. As I will show in the next chapter, the encounter between the Greeks and Persians at Marathon was not preceded by the normal set piece of battles in the classical period—the clash of light infantry, which could have offered a minor role appropriate to slaves.

Normally, crowds of skirmishers opened the battles, while the heavy infantry stood by as spectators. But in spite of their great numbers (sometimes there were as many as 10,000), the light infantrymen had "no perceptible effect upon the outcome of the battle."⁵⁴ They usually just chased one another around the field until some signal, such as the sound of a trumpet, recalled them. Even more remarkable is the fact that the sacrifices to the

gods were made after the skirmishers' recall, not before they were sent to engage their enemy counterparts; thus, if the sacrifices were unfavorable, there would be no battle.⁵⁵ Arrian's account of the use of skirmishers seems to make sense, although it was not applicable to all situations. He states that they were deployed either to scout the terrain before the phalanx advanced or to report on the armament of the enemy.⁵⁶

After choosing suitable terrain, deploying their troops, and receiving the information brought in by the skirmishers, the generals made their sacrifices to the gods and ordered a general advance. Their forward march, it seems, did not follow a straight line. Since the shield was held on the left, the right side of the hoplite was the most vulnerable part of his body. As a result,

all armies [writes Thucydides] are apt, on coming together, to thrust out their right wing too much; and both sides extend with their right beyond their opponents' left wing, because in their fear each man brings his uncovered side as close as possible to the shield of the man stationed on his right, thinking that the closer the shields are locked together the better is the protection. And it is the first man on the right wing who is primarily responsible for this, since he always wants to withdraw from the enemy his own uncovered side, and the rest, from a like fear, follow his example.⁵⁷

The line, then, was never straight. It would proceed on an incline, with the right wing the farthest ahead and the left wing the farthest behind.

The march itself gathered momentum as the line moved forward, proceeding slowly at first, then increasing its pace as it approached the enemy. Finally, after shouting out a war cry, the soldiers charged forward on the run to make contact with the enemy. According to Herodotus, this tactic was first introduced by the Athenians at the battle of Marathon: "Their battle being arrayed and the omens of sacrifice favoring, straightway the Athenians were let go and charged the Persians at a run . . . they were the first Greeks within my knowledge, who charged the enemies at a run."⁵⁸ The Spartans seem to have been the only exception to this rule; apparently, they marched slowly toward the enemy, in step with the music of flutes,⁵⁹ until they clashed into the opposing phalanx—each man planting himself "stoutly," "both feet firmly . . . upon the ground," his belly covered with "his broad shield" and "his mighty spear" in hand.⁶⁰

What actually happened once the two phalanxes clashed has been a matter of considerable debate. Traditionally, there have been two schools of thought on this. One group of scholars has maintained that hoplite confrontations were mainly a matter of using weapons (first the spear, then the sword) against similarly well-armored opponents.⁶¹ The other group of scholars has argued that the key for success was actually a shoving match (*othismos*), in which the front-line hoplites were somehow pushed to exert pressure on the opposing line until the enemy broke. The shoving match

has been described in various ways: a rugby "scrum," as John Warry claims, "actual leaning into the man ahead," as Victor Davis Hanson argues, or a "mass-shove," in the words of Robert D. Luginbill.⁶² It is likely any commander's first move was to try to break through enemy lines, which meant that greater weight and thus some pressure from the rear ranks was essential in the opening clash. But it is also clear that, if the shock of first contact failed, the next stage must have involved a combination of shield pressure, spear, and sword.

The spear was used to find and exploit an opening in the enemy's protection, such as his throat, and for this reason, it was held above the shoulder, pointing downward. The sword, says Pritchett, was best used in a thrusting gesture.⁶³ This hypothesis is arguable. The normal curved shape of the Greek sword (except for the straight Spartan sword) made it mainly suitable for slashing, and of course, most pictorial representations depict the slashing, not the thrusting, position (although this could have been an artistic convention). In any event, the Greeks clearly used the sword often. Many spears must have broken after the first contact, which meant that the spears' butt spikes and the swords must have been employed at close range. But the end of the battle must have come with the shoving match, a view supported by most of the literary sources.⁶⁴ Some scholars may claim that a shoving match was impossible because it would have endangered the stability of the whole line by making the soldiers tumble to the ground. And there is no doubt that pressure on the back would have resulted in a fall for most troops on the line. Yet, if the soldiers lined up sideways with their left feet and left shoulders ahead and if their companions in the rear ranks lined up in the same manner, then pressure would be exerted not on the center of a man's back but only on his shoulder. In other words, the line could retain its stability because of the position of the men's bodies and the feet in particular. And at the same time, the line could continue to exert force against the enemy. Furthermore, if there was no mass-shove, why was the Theban line 50 men deep at Leuctra and 25 men deep at Delium? After all, if such deep phalanxes were sacrificing width for depth, with the danger of having their flanks turned, depth must have provided a significant benefit.⁶⁵ The logical explanation seems to be that a deeper phalanx could use its greater weight in a shoving match.

If the first shock was successful or if hand-to-hand combat in combination with strong shield pressure allowed one side to break the opponent's line, then it would be possible to encircle the enemy's line—the outcome that Greek commanders feared most. Encirclement could result in two situations—one being the action just described, the other occurring when a line was longer than the enemy's and thus able to envelop the wing of its foe.⁶⁶ This meant that, in most cases, a general was forced to match the length of the enemy's line to ensure the safety of his own troops. The Greeks at

Marathon, for example, deployed a thin center to cover the 1,500-yard frontage of their troops.⁶⁷ If it was impossible to match the enemy's line in length, as it was for Alexander at Gaugamela,⁶⁸ then a general had two choices: He could either deploy a second line to safeguard the flanks of the first, or he could bring his line into contact with the opponent as soon as possible and hope to defeat him before an encirclement action could be completed.

If an enemy force was defeated without being encircled, there was a strong possibility that it would escape with only a few casualties. The hoplites were at a disadvantage in this regard when fighting a nonhoplite force. They could not (or at least they were not supposed to) abandon their line or drop their shields, and their armor made them slow. Thus, if the enemy abandoned their shields and ran, it was practically impossible for the hoplites to catch them unless they had light infantry or cavalry at their disposal. And at least in the early fifth century, it seems that no such backup was available. In the event the pursuing hoplites forgot their limitations and engaged in reckless pursuit, they could pay bitterly for their mistakes. This apparently happened in the last stages of the battle of Marathon when, Herodotus tells us, the hoplites "followed after the Persians in their flight, hewing them down, till they came to the sea. There they called for fire and laid hands on the ships."⁶⁹ Herodotus suggests that the Greeks abandoned the safety of the line and probably dropped their shields on the beach. They were to pay a heavy price: "In this work [trying to kill the enemies running for the ships or already on the ships] was slain Callimachus the polemarch, after doing doughty deeds; there too died one of the generals, Stesilaus son of Thrasylaus; moreover, Cynegirus [brother of the playwright Aeschylus and] son of Euph Orion fell there, his hand smitten off by an axe as he laid hold of a ship's poop, and many other famous Athenians."⁷⁰

Usually, the losses suffered by the defeated army in a Greek-Persian confrontation were quite disproportionate: For instance, only 192 Greeks died at Marathon, compared to about 6,400 Persians.⁷¹ But when hoplites confronted other hoplites, the losses were normally more even. There were, however, a few exceptions to this rule. For example, at Amphipolis in 422 B.C., the Spartans lost 7 men, but the Athenians lost 600; at the "Tearless Battle" of 367 B.C., there were large casualties among the Arcadians but none among the Spartans.⁷² Generally, however, the limitations on pursuit meant that if the battle followed a "normal" course, casualties were typically low and relatively proportionate. Peter Krentz maintains that the losses for the defeated troops in battles pitting hoplite against hoplite were usually in the range of 14 percent, with a maximum rarely exceeding 20 percent and a minimum of 10 percent. The average losses for the winning side were around 5 percent and rarely over 10 percent; sometimes, they were as low as 3 percent. In other words, the vanquished lost about two to

three times as many men as the winners.⁷³ Yet even a loss of 5 percent was a bad business for all. In the relatively small Greek states, the slaughter of a few citizens must have been a matter of great distress, especially since the casualties necessarily included some of the leaders of the community.

Polybius is probably correct in saying that during his era, the second century B.C., battles in Greece lasted only a short time,⁷⁴ but this was not necessarily true for the earlier period. The pattern that emerges out of the 38 land and 13 sea battles studied by Pritchett shows that the fighting usually persisted until evening, "during which time one infers that because of fatigue and the weight of the armor, men found some means of changing place in the files."⁷⁵ This does not mean, however, that a hoplite battle could be stopped and then joined again in an orderly or at least an effective manner, as occurred, for instance, between the Romans and Carthaginians at Zama in 202 B.C.⁷⁶ In a hoplite-versus-hoplite battle, changing places, probably during pauses in the shoving match, might have been feasible; stopping the action, however, as the Romans and Carthaginians did at Zama, would have been practically impossible. The battle could end only in retreat or, more often, in flight.

This situation, coupled with the fact that the Greeks rarely used reserves, brought a number of limitations to the hoplite leader's role. He had to tend to the material needs of his army ("furnishing military equipment and providing supplies for his men"⁷⁷); he had to look after their safety ("a general must see that his men are safe"⁷⁸); he had to be wise in choosing the proper "disposition of an army" and in judging "where and how to use each formation;"⁷⁹ he had to prepare his warriors psychologically so that they might believe that "victory over the enemy may add to their happiness,"⁸⁰ whether spiritual or material, because "all men fight in order that they may get the best life possible;"⁸¹ and he had to possess a number of other qualities, from being "resourceful" and "quick-witted" to being "both gentle and brutal, at once straightforward and designing, capable of both caution and surprise, lavish and rapacious, generous and mean, skilful in defence and attack."⁸² In other words, he had to know how to deploy his men into battle line; he had to inspire his soldiers with a speech before plunging them into contact with the enemy; and he had to be brave and fight on the line with the rest of his men—but in the most prestigious position.⁸³ At Chaeronea, for instance, Philip of Macedon took the right wing while Alexander, his son, fought on the left.⁸⁴

Unlike the Macedonian army or any army with an authoritarian structure, the hoplite armies of the classical period would tolerate no masters. As a result, the power invested in their generals was limited, and the chain of command was rudimentary. This was a matter not only of fighting style but also of class egalitarianism: Why should an Athenian citizen obey the commands of an equal? Among the hoplites, officers were merely tolerated,

and the common hoplite would talk back to the officers at will. Thus, the soldiers of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, confused by the drill the officers were teaching them, "got angry and said, 'Which of them [the officers] are we to obey? One of them tells us to advance and another forbids us!'"⁸⁵

Regular army assemblies tended to emphasize that the leader was just a temporary figure. The citizen-soldiers had elected him, and they could replace him at will. The Athenian *strategoi* (generals) were chosen from the wealthiest class of citizens and usually were restricted by a series of sanctions.⁸⁶ The situation in an army of mercenaries was even more freewheeling, with democracy ruling at the expense of efficiency.⁸⁷ At the same time, the hoplites' lack of tolerance for strong leadership was tempered with a deep sense of duty. Once in the army, the hoplite knew he was on a short leash. Deserting the battlefield was unthinkable—an action that was perceived not so much as a sign of a cowardly spirit but as a betrayal of the whole group. The experience of three Spartans at Thermopylae was illustrative. Two of them, Eurytus and Aristodemus, could have saved their own lives in the midst of battle, for they were lying away from the battlefield "very sick of ophthalmia."⁸⁸ The third, Pantites, had been sent to Thessaly with a message. When the final confrontation came, Eurytus, in spite of his poor sight, put on his armor and asked his servant to lead him into battle, where he was slaughtered like the rest of the Spartans. But "Aristodemus' heart [instead] failed him, and he stayed behind."⁸⁹ When the survivor went back to Sparta, "he was disgraced and dishonoured . . . no Spartan would give him fire, nor speak with him; and they called him for disgrace, Aristodemus the coward."⁹⁰ The same treatment greeted the poor Pantites, whose only fault had been to deliver a message to Thessaly that was probably issued by his own commander (it is not clear from Herodotus why he went to Thessaly). Aristodemus survived and fought at Plataea, but Pantites could not stand the ostracism and "hanged himself."⁹¹

One might be tempted to dismiss this example because, after all, the three soldiers were from Sparta, a city that was rigid in its interpretation of the duties of the citizen-soldier. However, even Herodotus, who was not particularly fond of the Spartans, sees nothing wrong in all this. Eurytus's ophthalmia must have been quite severe: Herodotus tells us that he "bade his helot lead him into the battle,"⁹² which implies that he either could not see at all well or was unable to stand on his own two feet. And if Aristodemus was in a similar condition, there should have been no disgrace in remaining away from the battlefield. Yet Herodotus is as severe on Aristodemus as his fellow Spartans were: "Aristodemus' heart failed him, and he stayed behind."⁹³ Thus, for Herodotus too, the behavior of these soldiers was not only a matter of personal cowardice but also of social loyalty. Even a sick man could not shirk his social duties, especially when (as Herodotus makes clear⁹⁴) another person, similarly sick, had left his bed only to be slain next to his comrades.

War was the monopoly of the hoplites. Other classes could be tolerated only in emergencies but no more. This idea was first formulated in the fifth century as a moral principle—the golden means—and later developed as a political and social concept.⁹⁵ Many authors, from Herodotus to the Pseudo-Xenophon of the *Constitution of Athens* to Thucydides, have argued that the opposition between the rich and the poor was detrimental to the state: The struggle between the rich, the great, the powerful, the good, the few against the poor, the weak, the people, the worthless, the mass—as the Greeks defined the two groups—was regarded as a primary cause of disorder and havoc in the city. In fact, this is one of the core ideas expressed by Thucydides in discussing the malaise of Athens in his account of the Peloponnesian War.⁹⁶

The logical outcome of this attitude was the belief that the middle classes had adopted the most appropriate form of living, the golden means. Consequently, they were regarded as an element of balance, reason, and justice between the two extremes of poverty and wealth. One of the clearest expressions of this concept is found in the work of the fifth-century Athenian playwright Euripides.⁹⁷ “In fact there are three categories of citizens,” Euripides says in his *Supplikes*, “the rich, useless citizens, who always desire more; the men without property who, deprived of the means of living, are dangerous because, moved mainly by jealousy and excited by the words of evil leaders, shoot out their fearful barbs against the property owners. Of the three groups, the one in the middle preserves [instead] the wellbeing of the cities defending the system established by the state.”⁹⁸

The hoplites separated themselves from the rest of society in a variety of ways. For example, the warriors had to buy their own equipment, an expensive proposition even when the linen corselet was substituted for the costly bronze cuirass (as it usually was).⁹⁹ Hoplites also distanced themselves from those who claimed an aristocratic background. As Hanson argues, the middling hoplites pushed “rich and poor Greeks . . . to the sides and rear of the phalanx, to the physical and ideological margins of the battlefield.”¹⁰⁰ Homeric warfare had involved aristocratic, chariot-riding warriors. But horse soldiers, whether in chariots or on horseback, played an increasingly secondary role in the hoplite era. The Athenians, for example, had no cavalry at all at Marathon. This was partly because keeping horses was an expensive proposition, because horses were unsuitable for most terrains in Greece, and because cavalry was only modestly effective since no proper saddles, horseshoes, and stirrups were available. But the diminished role of the cavalry also reflected the more egalitarian social principles of the hoplite era. First, as mentioned, only the very rich could buy and keep horses. Second, the cavalry could receive the plum job of all the fighting by eliminating the fleeing enemy or by a flank or rear action. For this to be acceptable, not only military thinking but also social assumptions had to change. This happened with the Macedonians of Philip II, a king surrounded by his aristo-

cratic Companions. It was only then that cavalry finally came to perform a crucial function on the battlefield of ancient Greece.

The hoplites did not discard all aristocratic notions of warfare. They, like the Homeric heroes, believed that combat was an agonistic endeavor and an expression of personal bravery and play.¹⁰¹ But above all, the hoplite army was the army of the middle strata of Greek society. Although their inferiors could be recruited in emergencies and their superiors could play a role, individually or as a group, at the edges of the battlefield, hoplites were the core, heart, and brains of warfare.

The conduct of war and the actions of the warriors on the battlefield reflected and reinforced the values of the ruling class, in most cases the middle farmers.¹⁰² Aristides, an eloquent orator who lived when Greece was under Roman control, claimed that in the Persian Wars, Athens had fought not only for the triumph of civilization over barbarism but also for the freedom of all Greece.¹⁰³ Indeed, writers and orators who lived during the Persian Wars often justified war as a defense of freedom. "Who is set as shepherd or as lord to oversee the host [of the Greeks]?" asks Xerxes' mother in a work by Aeschylus; "slaves of no one [answers the chorus] are they called, nor in subjection to any man."¹⁰⁴ And when Aristogoras, the despot of Miletus, went to Sparta to ask for help against the Persians, he pleaded with the Spartans as "leaders of Hellas" to "save your Ionian kinsmen from slavery."¹⁰⁵ Freedom in the sense used by the Greeks must be understood in both political and social terms. Freedom preserved the structure of the state and also the property and physical liberty of the free citizen. Apart from political freedom, the most powerful binding agents in a Greek society engaged in war (especially against its neighbors) were the sense of property and greed—that is, defending what belongs to you and acquiring what belongs to others—and the sense of religion.

Hanson downplays the role of greed and explains the Greeks' war motivation in terms of defending their agricultural property value system against the real or perceived threat posed by neighbors.¹⁰⁶ Pritchett initially seems to voice a similar opinion: "Economics played a part; but people did not think of war in terms of immediate economic profit."¹⁰⁷ Yet his most recent work suggests that though the Greeks rationalized their military confrontations on higher grounds, as time went by their economic goals became increasingly crucial.¹⁰⁸ War became a "mechanism for national income," and "the haphazard practice [the acquisition of other states' property] of the sixth and fifth centuries becomes sanctioned as commonplace, almost casual, in the fourth and third."¹⁰⁹

Practically all aspects of warfare were linked with religious principles, probably because the anthropomorphic gods of the Greeks could illustrate and strengthen the social values of the community better than any other form of religious expression. "The Greek city," a German scholar states,

“was . . . unthinkable without the Greek gods.”¹¹⁰ The decision to declare war was made at the highest level of the citizen body, yet all declarations or responses in war were intimately tied to examinations of portents or statements that the people attributed to the gods—even if it was sometimes necessary to force a certain interpretation from them! When Xerxes invaded Greece, for example, the Athenians as usual asked advice from the Delphic oracle. But the response dismayed them, for the oracle advised them to “flee to the ends of the earth from the circle embattled of Athens!”¹¹¹ The despairing Athenians could not accept this advice, and they asked the oracle for a new interpretation. The priestess obliged and this time reassured them: They should, she said, withdraw at the coming of the enemy “turning thy back to the foe; thou yet shalt meet him in battle.” Near the island of Salamis, she continued, “’tis writ that children of women/Thou shalt destroy one day, in the season of seedtime or harvest.”¹¹²

At other times, the observance of religious customs presented serious obstacles to entry into a war. For instance, when the Athenians had confronted Xerxes’ father, Darius, earlier in the Persian Wars, Athens had asked the Spartans for help. Although willing to help, the Spartans could not comply immediately with the request, for they were in the midst of a festival dedicated to Apollo: “It was the ninth day of the first part of the month, and they would make no expedition (they said) on the ninth day, when the moon was not full. So they waited for the full moon.”¹¹³ Consequently, the Athenians were forced to face the Persians at Marathon with only small help from the Plataeans.

Once the decision to enter into war was made, the news was conveyed to the opponent through a complex ritual. Heralds—men entrusted with oral messages—or ambassadors were sent to the enemy. If a peaceful agreement could not be reached, a lamb would be let loose across enemy territory—a symbolic gesture indicating that the army would wage war without quarter, ravaging the land and turning the opponent’s orchards and fertile fields into ground suitable only for beasts.¹¹⁴

The decision to begin a battle was inextricably tied to the will of the gods as well. At Plataea in 479 B.C., the Spartan general Pausanias restrained his men until the sacrifices to the gods “grew to be favorable”; only then would the Spartans “[charge] the Persians.”¹¹⁵ At Leuctra in 371 B.C., Epaminondas and the Theban leaders seemed to have used a variety of means connected with religion to raise the spirits of the Thebans and to discourage the Spartans. The Thebans were told they were going to fight on a terrain that had been desecrated by the Spartans, who had raped two Theban virgins there; they were also told to place garlands on the monument commemorating the Spartans’ evil deed. Other important news came from Thebes: The soldiers heard that the doors of the temples were opening of their own accord—a sure sign of victory—and that the arms of Heracles, the greatest

Theban of all, had disappeared from his temple. Could it be that Heracles himself would take part in the battle on the side of the Thebans?¹¹⁶

The end of battle, the escape from mortal danger, and the temporary or permanent suspension of hostilities were also infused with religious significance. The victorious general would erect a trophy on the battlefield and make sure that a share of the booty, usually a tenth, would go to the gods.¹¹⁷ A soldier who sought refuge in a temple and asked the protection of the gods might be spared unless his enemy intended to defy the divine and invoke all the negative consequences that such a challenge implied.¹¹⁸ At other times, religious festivals like the Olympics could bring hostilities to a halt. And the gods themselves were called to witness agreements reached by warring parties at all stages of negotiations.¹¹⁹ The fact is that religion was the most powerful incentive to keep good faith in the agreements and treaties resulting from war. Promises to men could be broken, but oaths to the gods could not because victory went to those whom the gods favored.¹²⁰ This assumption underpinned the Greek's handling of all legal aspects of warfare. As Yvon Garlan states, their rituals were not so much designed for human consumption as to keep the good will of the gods on their side.¹²¹ To paraphrase Franco Fornari on the psychoanalysis of modern war, rituals were also a way of endowing "*the process of killing* with the function of deciding which of the two groups is 'right,' precisely as if the process of rational verification were replaced by killing as a *criterion of truth*, in a massive sadistic transformation of the validation process."¹²² And finally, rituals served as a testament to the belief that war and the makers of war embodied the highest values of the community. Consider, for instance, the funeral honors accorded men who had fallen on the battlefield. In fifth-century Athens, the eulogy was performed in front of ten cypress sarcophagi, representing the ten tribes of the city-state. And the eulogy itself was intended not to raise the individual but to simultaneously praise and mourn for the social body. As Marcel Detienne eloquently says, when the city delivered the eulogy for the fallen, it praised its glory, the only form of glory that it could tolerate.¹²³ The glory for the fallen was forever. In Athens, the state and each tribe within it kept a record of the dead and missing, open to anyone to consult—something like the Vietnam Memorial *ante litteram*. And in Sparta, only those fallen in war had the honor of having their name inscribed on their tombstones.¹²⁴

In "The Profession of Arms," an episode in his 1984 series *War*, presented by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Gwynne Dyer asked a Vietnam veteran, "How would you feel to go into combat again?" Lt. Col. Michael Petty of the United States Army answered:

I do not want to go. I start to say, I think anyone would be a fool to want to go. I do not want to say that. I would go because I am a professional soldier and I take great pride in the fact that I am a professional soldier. I trained to be

a soldier, and I can't think of anything more honorable for me personally than to be a soldier and it's my job if my country asks me to go and fight. I would do that for myself, for my family, for my country—and for my God. But I do not want to have to do that, but I am willing to if it comes along.¹²⁵

Petty's emphasis on the fact that his duty was tied to his role as a professional soldier is indicative of the separation that exists today between the people who fight and society as a whole. But the rest of the statement by the U.S. soldier (that his service on the battlefield was “for myself, for my family, for my country” and, after a pause, “for my God”) expressed a belief that the free citizens of the ancient Greek state would have shared. Not even Euripides, an intellectual who usually shied away from the normal warlike obligations of citizenship,¹²⁶ would have been an exception to the rule in this regard. The assumption that it was a citizen's duty to give his life for the state was unchallenged in ancient Greece. In the words of one of their enemies, the “only holiday [of the Athenians] is to do their duty”: “They regard untroubled peace as a far greater calamity than laborious activity.”¹²⁷ The key phrase here, as in Lt. Col. Petty's statement, is “to do their duty.”

The ruling class of Athens enforced the concept of doing one's duty with all the people—whether they were hoplites or not and whether they benefited from war or were hurt by it. War waged by the few was perceived to be in the interest of the many. This belief characterized the most dramatic period of Greek warfare—the confrontation early in the classical age that pitted the tiny Greek states against the mighty Persian Empire.

Chapter Two

First Blood on the Plain of Marathon

The Athenians, closing all together with the Persians, fought in memorable fashion; for they were the first Greeks, within my knowledge, who charged their enemies at a run, and the first who endured the sight of Median garments and men clad therein; till then, the Greeks were affrighted by the very name of Medes.

—Herodotus VI.112

Prologue

It was probably in the first half of the second century A.D. that a Greek traveler by the name of Pausanias visited Marathon. About 640 years had passed since the day of the great battle of Marathon, but on the plain, he could still find reminders of the conflict—the burial mound of the Athenians “upon it [the] slabs of the killed according to their tribes” and the burial ground of the Boeotian Plataeans and of their slaves, “for slaves fought then for the first time by the side of their masters.” Pausanias was an honest man, very proud of his Greek ancestry, but not one prone to easy enthusiasms. Yet his imagination, haunted by the memories of the past, could not refrain from a touch of romantic fantasy. When the sun fell across the western sky and the light of the day died away, he wrote, Greek hoplites and Persian fighters restaged their ancient battle again and again: “At Marathon every night you can hear horses neighing and men fighting.”¹

In visiting the battleground, Pausanias was following a tradition begun soon after the great confrontation, a tradition sanctified by Athens during the early stages of the Peloponnesian War.² The Spartans, whose 2,000 warriors had arrived too late to fight the Persians, did not return immediately to their city after the battle ended. Instead, they marched another 45 kilometers to look at the battlefield because “they decided to see the Medes,” those whose garments alone had been a source of fear for the

whole of Hellas: "Till then, the Greeks were affrighted by the very name of the Medes."³ After the battle, contrary to custom, the Athenians decided to build a tomb on the spot for the men who had died there since they considered their valor outstanding.⁴ And the composer of Aeschylus's epitaph chose to remember him not for his plays or for his role at Salamis but for his participation at Marathon.⁵

Even Aristophanes, who was born in 450 B.C. about 40 years after the great battle, and who seems to have been one of the few intellectuals uneasy about the warlike tendencies of his society, could not help but express the same sense of wonder when dealing with Marathon. The veterans "who at Marathon fought with the Medes, for Athens and Hellas contending,/and won the great battle . . . left us a theme for our songs and speeches unending."⁶ "At Marathon arrayed [say the veterans], to the battle-shock we ran,/and our mettle we displayed, foot to foot, man to man,/and our name and our fame shall not die."⁷

The main heirs of the Assyrian Empire in the Middle East had been the Persians. From the accession of their king Cyrus the Great in 549 B.C. to the early part of the fifth century, they had conquered a territory that stretched from the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, and the Aral Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in the south and from the Indus River in the east to Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Hellespont in the west.⁸ In Asia Minor, the Persians had come into contact with Greek culture, for Greek colonists had founded most of the cities of Ionia, the name given to a region on the western shores of modern Turkey.

Probably in the late summer or early fall of 499, the Greek colonies, subjects of the Persian Empire, had revolted. They had asked their homeland for help, but only two cities had responded to the plea for military support—the city of Eretria on the island of Euboea, just north of Athens, and Athens itself. Sparta had considered the offer to participate but declined. The conquest of Susa "where lives the great [Persian] king, and [where] there are the storehouses of his wealth"⁹ must have appealed to the Spartans, for they had waited three days before giving their answer to the Ionian envoy. Yet when he heard that Susa was "a three months' journey inland," the Spartan king had "cut short all the rest" and bade the envoy of the rebels "depart from Sparta before sunset." A journey three months from the sea? Never.¹⁰

The Greek rebels had had some initial success, and the Ionians and Athenians had even sacked the imperial city of Sardis, but eventually, the Persians had crushed them. When the Ionian cities fell one after the other, the Athenians knew that they too had to confront the mighty Persian Empire. It was just a matter of time. Darius, the Persian king, had no choice but to punish the slight that the Greeks of the mainland had inflicted on him. His hold on the Ionian cities of Asia Minor would never be secure unless he

forced Greece to recognize his sovereignty. Moreover, the king's imperialistic goals strengthened the motives of revenge. The Persians had engaged in a policy of expansion into Europe since 520 B.C. Their goals were clear: first Thrace, then Macedonia, and finally the Greek states. By 492 B.C., Darius felt that he could strengthen his rule over Thrace and Macedonia and then "pillage, burn, and enslave Athens." The Persian invasion came from the north. Initially, Persia's foray into Europe was successful. The Persians strengthened their control over Thrace and integrated Macedonia fully into the Persian Empire. But then their expedition met with disaster. Half the fleet sank while rounding the promontory off Mount Athos in the northern part of the Greek peninsula; the army was defeated by a Thracian army, and Mardonius, the Persian commander, was wounded.¹¹

Two years later, Darius sent another fleet under the command of Datis and Artaphrenes (Figure 2.1). This time, the ships did not travel the treacherous waters around Mount Athos but cut directly across the southern edges of the Aegean Sea, hopping from island to island until they landed near Eretria, one of the two major offending cities. The Persian commanders must have planned their expedition in three stages: first to reestablish firm control over the Cyclades islands, then to conquer Eretria, and finally to bring Athens to its knees either through military action or through psychological pressure.¹² They relied on at least three factors to break Athens's will to resist—firm control of the islands between the shores of Asia Minor and Attica, the region in which Athens is situated; the sight of the Eretrian citizens led to Persia in chains; and internal political discord in Athens herself. The city was divided between the ruling party, which was based on the middle classes of the population and which had adopted a warlike attitude, and the aristocratic party, which leaned toward reaching a compromise with the Persians. Hippias, who had ruled Athens before his expulsion in 510 B.C. and who had friends among the aristocratic faction, was among the participants in the Persian expedition.¹³

The Eretrians were struck with terror at the arrival of the Persian fleet. They put all their hopes in a siege. For six days, they repulsed the attacks of their enemies, but on the seventh, "two Eretrians of repute . . . betrayed the city to the Persians." The victors were pitiless: They plundered and burnt the temples and led the population away in chains.¹⁴

It was now time to punish Athens. The Persians, however, shied away from a direct approach. Although the most obvious landing place would have been the Phalerum near Athens, they landed instead at Marathon, about 45 kilometers from their goal (Figure 2.2).¹⁵ N.G.L. Hammond agrees with the choice.¹⁶ Marathon stood near the supply lines of the Persian army; it had an anchorage well suited for the fleet; and it was the fittest part of Attica for the Persian cavalry. (This is one of the two reasons also cited by Herodotus, the other being Marathon's nearness to the new supply



FIGURE 2.1

base of Eretria.)¹⁷ Moreover, the location favored the Persian cavalry: If the Athenian soldiers remained in Athens, the Persians could advance over ground well suited to their horsemen; if, however, the Athenians came to meet them on the Marathon plain, the Persian cavalry again would have fought on favorable terrain. The Persians' Greek puppet Hippias had apparently also suggested landing there¹⁸—a fact that hints at the possibility that at this stage, the Persians still thought they could subjugate Athens by internal treachery; the party favorable to Hippias would deliver the city to them without the necessity of shedding Persian blood. It also made sense because any landing close to Athens, even if physically possible, would have been much more difficult to achieve because of the proximity of the Athenian army. Finally, it was likely that Hippias expected some local support. It was at Marathon that his father Peisistratus had landed in 546 in his successful attempt to gain political power in Athens. Also, Hippias' family came from that area.

The easy capture of Athens must have suited the old Hippias, who had had a dream that seemed to confirm the success of the expedition. He had

dreamed, in a manner reminiscent of Sophocles' Oedipus, that he had lain with his mother. It was a sign, he said afterward, that he would "return to Athens and recover his power." However, his interpretation would soon change. As he touched the shore of the Marathon plain, he was seized by a coughing and sneezing fit so violent that one of his old teeth fell to the ground. Frantically, he tried to recover his tooth but he failed. "This land [he finally exclaimed] is none of ours, nor shall we avail to subdue it; my tooth has all the share of it that was for me."¹⁹

It is doubtful that the Persian leaders believed Hippias's words, even if we accept the story of his dream as real and not as a creation of Herodotus's dramatic imagination. The Persian generals Datis and Artaphrenes had landed a considerable force in Greece, although not in the 600 triremes suggested by Herodotus and certainly not with the 200,000 infantrymen and 20,000 cavalymen listed by Cornelius Nepos.²⁰ But it was still a very large army—77,000 according to Hammond, although only about 25,000 of those were a fighting force; the rest were merely support troops.²¹ The Persians could also count to their advantage the fact that they had normally beaten the Greeks they had met earlier in Egypt and Asia Minor.

Herodotus lists seventeen types of armaments when describing the Persians' equipment.²² On the basis of that, the Persian soldiers can be divided into at least four categories: light infantry from Asia Minor, armed with javelins and small round targets; heavy infantry from Asia Minor, carrying the usual panoply for this type of soldier—helmets, large shields, some form of cuirass, spears, and swords or daggers; infantry and light cavalry from Bactria and the Iranian plains, equipped with short spears or axes and daggers but no armor; and light infantry and cavalry from Media and Persia, armed with wicker shields, sometimes corslets, bows, spears, and daggers.²³ Pride of place, as both Aeschylus and Herodotus confirm, without doubt belonged to the bow and the cavalry.²⁴ The composite bow seems to have been very effective, although it was different from the type used by the most famous archers of this period of antiquity—the Indo-European Scythians of the plains of southern Russia.²⁵

The Persian army was quite different from that of the Greek hoplites. This was not only because its backbone was mounted men and archers but also because while the Greek hoplites were homogeneous both in ethnic and in political terms, the Persians were a cosmopolitan army drawing their recruits from all corners of Asia—not only from Persia and Media but also from India, Bactria, Assyria, and Asia Minor. There must have been some obvious weaknesses in this arrangement, for a number of reasons—different languages, different styles of armament, different ways of fighting—but the most obvious weakness in modern eyes, the lack of ethnic solidarity, was much less serious than it might at first seem. People of the time did not fight in the name of common blood bonds unless limited to the confines of

a city. The key for them was plunder, and the search for plunder united all Persians, just as it would later unite the diverse army of Alexander the Great. Actually, if we look at the problem from this angle, the Greeks were at a disadvantage, not the Persians. The invaders were men who made war their profession; the Greeks, by contrast, fought for the freedom of their cities and thus had a greater urgency to survive than their opponents, but they were theoretically a group of amateurs in comparison to some of the best units of the Persian army.²⁶

The difference between the Persians and the Greek hoplites is even more striking when we compare their methods of waging war. The limited armor and the use of light troops and cavalymen gave a great deal of mobility to the Persian army. In other words, their soldiers were well suited to an empire that stretched from the shores of the Indus River to the borders of Europe, even if their mobility must have been hampered by the problem of moving such large bodies of men. On the battlefield, the Persian army relied on speed and numbers to overwhelm the enemy, just the opposite of the hoplites whose strength was based on mass and power. Now, with the invaders a few hours from Athens on the shores of Marathon, the time had come to test the validity of the two methods designed to bring victory to one side and destruction to the other.

The Battle

The army that the Athenians sent to Marathon was led by a commander in chief (the polemarch) named Callimachus and ten generals (the strategoi).²⁷ One of the generals was a Greek of aristocratic birth named Miltiades, whose family had established a kind of personal kingdom at the border of the Persian Empire. He himself had fought against the Persians, but now back in the city of his ancestors, he had become identified with one of the parties that was dividing Athens at the time. Miltiades supported the war faction and the continuation of a constitution based on principles acceptable to the middle classes and thus to the hoplites.

The Athenian army had between 9,000 and 10,000 hoplites.²⁸ There were no bowmen, no horsemen, and probably no light infantrymen, at least at the moment of the battle. When the Persians landed at Marathon, the Athenians had quickly asked Sparta for help. The Spartans would be coming but only in due time. They could not offer immediate assistance, for they were in the midst of a sacred festival, probably the Karneia in honor of Apollo. The only Greeks who sent a contingent to help Athens were the Plataeans. Between 600 and 1,000 of their hoplites had come to share victory or destruction.²⁹

It must have taken about two days for Callimachus's soldiers to march the 45 kilometers from Athens to Marathon.³⁰ They approached the site from the rugged terrain at the south of the bay, and they must have looked

down with a sense of fear and excitement at the mighty army of their enemies arrayed on the plain and at the shiny fleet anchored to the north near the cape of Kynosura. They did not attack but stayed on the hills near a precinct sacred to a god dear to the people of the *deme* (village) of Marathon, Heracles.

Besides two epitaphs and four other inscriptions, the three most important sources on the battle are Herodotus (who wrote when the veterans of the great battle were still alive), the Roman Cornelius Nepos (in the first century B.C.), and the Greek Pausanias (who was active in the first half of the second century A.D.). Herodotus and Pausanias basically agree, but Cornelius Nepos presents a picture that at times is sharply different. In spite of some of its obscurities and contradictions, I take Herodotus's account as being fundamentally correct.³¹

The first great historian of Western civilization pictures the Greek host in emotional and tactical disarray at the sight of the enemy. It is clear that the council of war, ten generals and the commander in chief Callimachus, was divided on what to do: "Some advised that they should not fight, thinking that they were too few to do battle with the Median army, and some one of whom was Miltiades, that they should."³² The reluctance to engage in battle must have reflected not only physical fear of the enemy but also the internal struggles of the city. Were the war party defeated, Athens would be forced to accept the Persians as overlords, and the old tyrannical party would triumph over the democratic values of the middle classes of society and thus of the hoplites. The council seems to have been equally divided on this issue, so the vote of the polemarch could have meant victory either for those who wanted to sit and wait or for the others who recognized that confrontation was inevitable, either sooner or later. For some like Miltiades, fighting *now* seemed a necessity that they could not avoid. The decision rested with Callimachus.

Miltiades took the polemarch aside. In an emotional conversation, he outlined the options open to them. It was a matter of freedom or slavery for their city, he said, "to bow their necks" to the Persians or to take matters in their own hands and lay a claim "to be the first of Greek cities." Battle could not be delayed. It was imperative before Athens was "infected by corruption": "Let heaven but deal fairly with us, and we may well win in this fight."³³

Herodotus reports no other strategic arguments except those posed by the internal political situation in Athens. The Athenians had to fight, as Miltiades said, before corruption (that is, betrayal) seeped in; otherwise, the Persian plan of subjugating the city without bloodshed would come to fruition. In any case, Miltiades was able to convince Callimachus, and the decision was made to wage battle. Herodotus, however, says that Miltiades decided to wait a few more days until it was his turn to lead the army.

Herodotus must have been wrong here. He apparently telescoped a characteristic of his own times—the daily turnover of leadership among the strategoi—to the period of the Persian Wars. The visual representation of the battle in the Painting Colonnade at Athens, described by Pausanias, clearly shows a different arrangement in the command structure: “Of the fighters the most conspicuous figures in the painting are Callimachus, who had been elected commander-in-chief by the Athenians, Miltiades, one of the generals, and a hero called Echetlus.”³⁴

There were a number of strategic and tactical reasons for the delay. Attacking the whole Persian army in a plain that, as Herodotus says, was the most suitable of Attica for riding³⁵ would have been both stupid and suicidal. Meanwhile, time was working in the Athenians’ favor: If they waited long enough, the Spartans would send help. Moreover, the Athenians had no worries about their supply line, and finally, as long as they remained on the rugged terrain south of the bay, they offered a difficult target for the Persian cavalry. But Miltiades was correct that attack was inevitable, not only for the strategic reasons dictated by internal politics but also because, even if they had wanted to, their withdrawal toward Athens may have been tactically impossible. Once they left the safety of their rugged terrain to return to Athens, they would have become prey to the more mobile Persians.

The Persians too could not wait forever. Their supply line, even after the conquest of the nearby island of Euboea, must have been tenuous for an army of that size. The control of the sea-lanes between Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula was subject to the caprices of weather and the problem posed by relatively long distances.³⁶ Moreover, if the Persians waited too long and a revolution in Athens did not hand them the city, the enemy force would have grown, as the Spartans joined the Athenians and Plataeans.³⁷ However, as long as the Athenians were encamped on the high, rugged ground, it would have been to the Persians’ tactical disadvantage to attack. After waiting a few days and noticing that the Athenians had no intention of abandoning the high ground, the Persians must have decided to force the issue in a political rather than a military sense.

There is no direct evidence to support this conclusion, but Herodotus’ account of the battle implies that the whole Persian army was not present. This might mean either that some of the Persians had embarked on their ships at night or that they were in the process of doing so at the moment of the Greeks’ attack. The Persians were not caught unprepared, for they were in line ready to receive the Greeks,³⁸ but their cavalry was clearly not present or present only in very small numbers. Herodotus, who has mentioned three times before that the Persian army included cavalry,³⁹ never refers to it in his account of the battle. The Byzantine encyclopedia of the tenth century A.D., the *Suda*, says that at the moment of attack, the Persians’ horses were “apart (or far away),” which may suggest that the cavalry was in the

neighborhood gathering supplies. Such an activity is unlikely, however, because it is clear that the Persian line was ready for the Greek hoplites, and if they expected an attack, they would have made every effort to deploy the most powerful component of their battle order if it was nearby. The visual sources for the battle, the Stoa painting of around 460 B.C. and two derived sources, show that some horses were present: A fragment of the Brescia sarcophagus displays a horse in the midst of a struggle in front of two ships' sterns, and a frieze of the Nike temple on the Athens acropolis portrays a horseman taken down by a Greek.⁴⁰ J.A.S. Evans has argued, partly on the basis of this evidence, that the horses probably were present at the battle. But he maintains that the cavalry contingent of the Persian host was much smaller than originally thought—only about 200 men. At the moment of attack, some of them had been sent forward toward Athens to secure the road since the Persians had decided to move by land toward the city. Thus, only a few, left near the ships, played a role.⁴¹ Evans's interpretation is less convincing than the traditional argument that the horses constituted a considerable portion of the enemy army and that they were at the moment of attack already on the ships or at the point of embarkation, as Herodotus, the *Suda*, and even the visual sources seem to suggest. Embarking horses on the unstable platforms of the ancient ships must have been a laborious process, and no army could leave this task for the last moment with the enemy close at hand. Loading the horses would instead have been the first thing to do in the mind of a general who was ready to leave.

The Persian plan must have been to embark most of the army on the ships and to land it close to Athens, at the Phalerum, near the gates of the city. With the Persian host there, it would have been much easier to convince the Athenians to give in to the party that favored accepting the Persian yoke. The Persian success, of course, relied on the inactivity of the Athenian army at Marathon—an expectation that, on paper, seemed reasonable enough. The Athenian army could not turn back and proceed toward the Phalerum to prevent the landing. If they did, they would have ventured on terrain where the Persians (who had remained on the beach and were still more numerous and mobile than the Greeks) could have harassed them even if they had no horsemen at all. If the Greeks remained in their position on the rugged ground, the Persian fleet would have landed near Athens without protection from its soldiers. If the Greeks attacked, the Persians must have been confident of inflicting many casualties if not defeat, so that the final confrontation with Athens would still have favored the Persian host. Clearly, in spite of the Persians already on the ships or in the process of boarding them, the position of the Athenians was still precarious.

The Greek battle plan, as Herodotus's and Cornelius Nepos's accounts maintain, must have been Miltiades', despite the fact that the overall leadership position was held by Callimachus, for it was the polemarch who

took the position of honor on the right wing.⁴² The first problem Miltiades had to face was to ensure the safety of his line. He could do so only by depleting the center—which was only “a few ranks deep, and [where] the line was weakest, each wing being strong in numbers.”⁴³ Judging by the length of the battlefield (about 1,500 meters, whether the Greeks were arranged along a roughly south-north or an east-west axis)⁴⁴ and by the number of Greek soldiers (10,000, including the Plataeans), the line must have been evenly divided into three sectors: the right with 4,000 men, 8 men deep; the center with 2,000 men, 4 men deep; and the left with another 4,000 men, also 8 men deep.⁴⁵

As the battle would show, the Greek plan called for containment, if possible, of the enemy center, victory at the wings, and then a pincer movement of the wings against the Persian center. Miltiades must have had this in mind from the very beginning. It would have been impossible to coordinate a pincer movement on the spot, given the limited communications of hoplite warfare. Moreover, even if communications were possible, it would have been hard to restrain the Greeks from pursuing the fleeing Persians and to convince them, on the spur of the moment, that they should direct their wings to assail the enemy center.

The greatest disadvantage of the hoplites was their slowness. Facing an army composed of light infantrymen who relied primarily on missiles, they would have been easy targets as long as they remained at a distance. The effective or killing range of the Persian bow was probably about 175 meters, if we accept W. McLeod's estimate, or 150 meters, if we agree with Hammond.⁴⁶ A hoplite could probably cover the killing zone of 175 meters, the last few meters at a rush, in about 60 seconds. If we assume that the Persians could release 1 arrow every 10 seconds, theoretically then they could shoot 5 or 6 arrows before the lines clashed. This reasoning assumes, however, that the Persian archers would stand there impassively shooting while the Greeks charged them. If they cared for their lives at all (and we must assume that they did), their behavior would have been quite different. More likely, they would have shot no more than 4 arrows at the killing range and then would have switched to spear or sword or run for safety to the rear of spear-armed troops. The other alternative—shooting from behind blocks of spear-armed infantry—would have certainly weakened the impact of their arrows.

All this suggests that it would have benefited the Persians to contain the Greeks at a distance as far as possible, while it was in the interest of the Greeks to join hand-to-hand battle immediately. Miltiades' choice was flawless: “Straightaway the Athenians were let go and charged the Persians at a run”; “they were the first Greeks, within my knowledge, who charged their enemies at a run.”⁴⁷ We have to discard, however, Herodotus's implication that the run lasted no less than 8 stades (about 1,460 meters).⁴⁸ A soldier whose average height was about 1.68 meters, carrying a load of

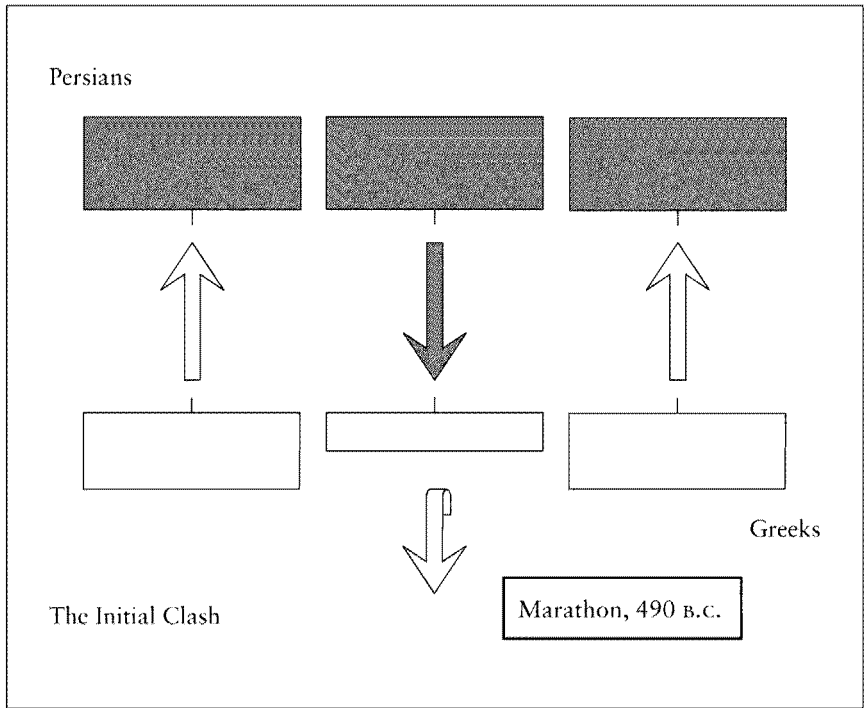


FIGURE 2.3

arms and armor about half his body weight, could hardly run more than a few meters if he wanted to contact the enemy with any semblance of physical vigor. This must have meant that the hoplites rushed the enemy only in the last 20 to 30 meters or so of the killing range of the bow.

The Persians must have looked in wonder at these crazy men running toward them: "When the Persians saw them come running they prepared to receive them, deeming the Athenians frenzied to their utter destruction, who being (as they saw) so few were charging them at speed, albeit they had no horsemen nor archers."⁴⁹ This assessment must have been strengthened when the Persian center, which had the best troops ("the Persians themselves and the Sacae"⁵⁰) "prevailed and broke the Greeks, pursuing them inland" (Figure 2.3).⁵¹

Under normal circumstances, this would have meant the end of any other army, but Miltiades' plan must have taken into account that his center might run into grave difficulties and that everything would depend on timing. He had to defeat the enemy wings before the situation of his center became irreversible. Things worked in his favor. The Athenians and Plataeans, respectively at the right and left wings, prevailed, but they "suffered their enemies to fly" and then "drew their wings together to fight against those who had

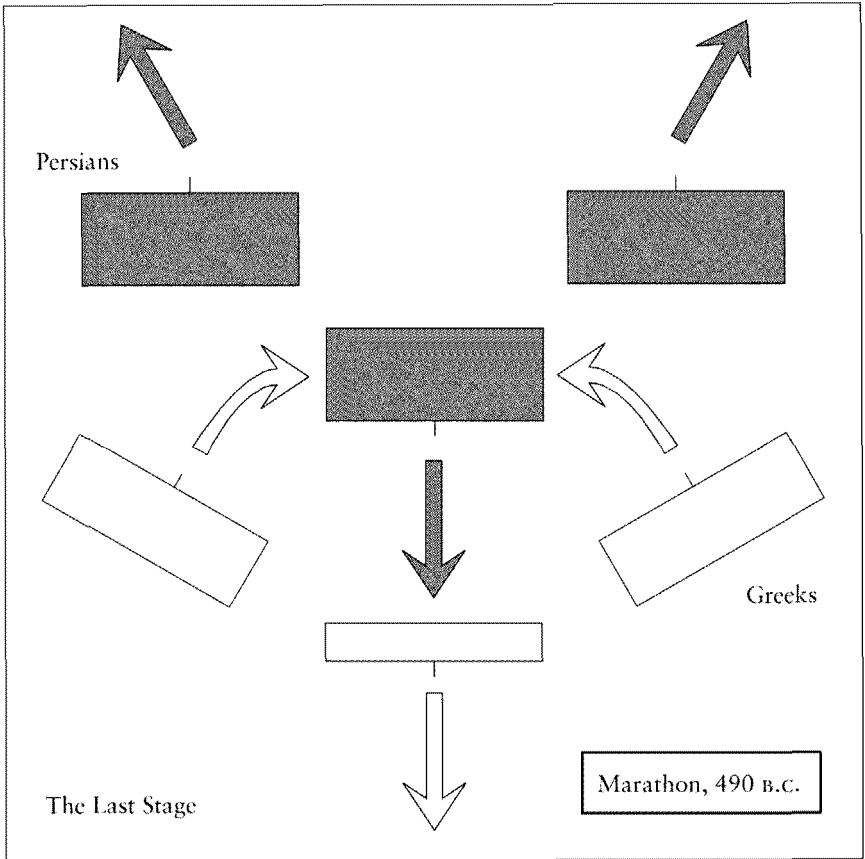


FIGURE 2.4

broken the middle of their line; and here the Athenians had the victory” (Figure 2.4).⁵²

We do not know what the defeated Persian wings did, but it is likely that most of them sought refuge on the ships. For the Persian center, it was a different matter. Some must have sought refuge on the ships, and others must have run toward the northern part of the battlefield. It was then, when the enemy was on the run, that the pitiless business of slaughter began. The Greeks even pursued those seeking refuge on their ships. It was probably an ill-advised move, for they won seven enemy ships but paid dearly for them: Some of their leaders were killed, among them the commander in chief Callimachus who, armed with Miltiades’ plan, had so ably led them into battle.⁵³ A number of Persians must have been killed there in the shallow waters of the bay as well, but their biggest casualties were elsewhere. The majority of the fleeing Persians ran, “pushing one another into the morass”;⁵⁴ “There

is at Marathon a lake which for the most part is marshy. Into this ignorance of the roads made the foreigners fall in their flight, and it is said that this accident was the cause of their great losses."⁵⁵ Persian casualties numbered about 6,400 men. The Athenian casualties, as was typical for the victors of most ancient battles, were very small—only 192 men.⁵⁶

Cornelius Nepos estimates that the Persian force at the battle included 100,000 infantrymen and 10,000 cavalrymen.⁵⁷ The belief that the Persians enjoyed a numerical superiority went unchallenged until German historian Hans Delbrück made a shocking statement, asserting that the Persians were either equal or inferior in number to the Greeks.⁵⁸ Generally, historians have not accepted Delbrück's thesis, although most have drastically altered their estimates on the number of Persians present at Marathon and in the whole campaign.⁵⁹ If we assume (1) that the Persian center was wiped out when caught in the pincer movement and then in the swamp and that the casualties of the two wings must have been limited (after all, the Greeks "suffered their enemies to fly") and (2) that the Persian line was evenly divided into three equal contingents of men, then we arrive at a figure between 15,000 and 18,000. If this assumption is correct, the more lightly armed Persians, each occupying a space of about 1.5 square meters, must have lined up in blocks that were 15 to 18 ranks deep. The total figure could be closer to 15,000 if we contend that (unlike the situation in warfare between hoplites) the lightly armed Persians could have suffered a fairly large number of casualties even when fighting on the wings. If we assume that the casualties would have been about 1,000 on the wings, we still arrive at a force of 5,000 in the center. And if we agree that most of the center troops were killed, then we have a figure of about 5,000 for each of the three sectors of the Persian line and a total force of about 15,000 Persians at the moment of confrontation.

The Persians had lost the battle. But they could still win the war. Their fleet, with the remnants of their troops aboard, picked up their Eretrian prisoners from the nearby island of Euboea and set sail toward Athens, "hoping to win the city before the Athenians' coming."⁶⁰ Miltiades quickly realized the gravity of the situation and recalled his men: "The Athenians marched back with all speed to defend their city, and outstripped the foreigner in their coming." In his own inimitable dramatic style, Herodotus tersely adds, "They came from one precinct of Heracles at Marathon, and encamped in another at Cynosarges." The symbol of Greek power, Heracles, seemed to have been with the Athenians from beginning to end. And the end, indeed, had come, for the Persian fleet "lay a while off Phalerum . . . there they anchored, and thence sailed away back to Asia."⁶¹

Miltiades' plan had been flawless. He had realized that the Athenians had no option but to fight in order to prevent a defeat spawned by internal political divisions. Once on the battlefield, he had delayed the attack until

the last and most favorable moment for the Greek army. He must have planned the pincer movement with a daring tactical improvisation. He had made sure that his heavily armed soldiers would come to grips with the enemy quickly by rushing them as fast as possible across the last meters of the killing zone. Finally, his forced march toward Athens had left the enemy with no option but to accept defeat.

The Persians made an initial strategic mistake by abandoning Mardonius's invasion plan of 492, which called for a methodical advance from the north. This would have secured a more stable supply line and supported a larger expedition. But the rest of their choices had not necessarily been wrong in either a strategic or a tactical sense. Attacking Eretria before Athens and sacking Eretria made sense if we assume that a great part of the Persian plan relied on psychological pressure. Landing on the Marathon plain was also not necessarily a mistake. It was an important spot on their supply line, and their presence there left them with a number of basically sound military options. True, they had split their army at the moment of the Greek attack, but they had very few options at that time, and landing directly near Athens seemed a must when they realized that time and their own logistical problems were working in the Athenians' favor. Finally, they could have won the war if they had reached Athens before Miltiades. They may well have been mistaken in not attacking the Greek host at Marathon from the very beginning. Although the position of the hoplites was very strong, the Persians could have relied on their own numbers and on the mobility of their dismounted troops to overwhelm the Greeks. Actually, according to Cornelius Nepos,⁶² it was the Persians who, confident of their numerical superiority, attacked and not the Greeks, but this is an assessment that most historians have not accepted.⁶³ Ultimately, the Persians lost not because their choices had been wrong but because the strategic and tactical choices of Miltiades had all worked in his favor, almost magically. The Persians may have erred in choosing to strike across the Aegean, not from the north, and in failing to deploy a larger force. More soldiers and triremes could have won the day.

The Persians would not make the same mistakes in their next expedition, which came ten years later and was led directly by Darius's son, the new King Xerxes. Clearly, a great empire could not let small, insignificant Hellas defy it. Athens had to be crushed.

Chapter Three

Greeks, Persians, and the Symbols of War

Europeans are more warlike [than Asiatics because of differences in climate], and also because of their institutions, not being under kings as are Asiatics. For . . . where there are kings, there must be the greatest cowards. For men's souls are enslaved, and refuse to run risks readily and recklessly to increase the power of somebody else. But independent people, taking risks on their own behalf and not on behalf of others are willing and eager to go into danger, for they themselves enjoy the prize of victory. So institutions contribute a great deal to the formation of courageousness.

—Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places*, XXIII

A New Invasion

An empire that stretched from the mists of the Himalayas to the green forests of Thrace could not let those “Ionians that dwell in Europe to make a mock of us.”¹ Indeed, the Persians had continued to prepare for a new punitive expedition. By 489 B.C., Darius sent heralds throughout his lands to announce new taxes and to raise new armies. The preparations went on for three years, but then in the fourth year, in 486 B.C., they were stalled by three events: The rich satrapy of Egypt rose in rebellion, Judah followed suit, and the Great King died. His son and heir, Xerxes, reestablished Persian rule in Egypt and Judah, but serious preparations for invading Greece did not begin again until 484. By 481, Xerxes was ready to act. He sent heralds to Greece to ask the usual terms of submission—earth and water—and to prepare supply depots of food and water for his army. Only Athens and Sparta were not asked to submit. The new Great King wanted to accomplish what his father had failed to do—to destroy Sparta and Athens. A few months later, he was ready to march against them.² Ten years had passed, but the Persians were again in motion with “the might of a great multitude.”³

The final decision to proceed with the invasion, according to Herodotus, had come only after a great deal of soulsearching. Xerxes, unlike his father, Darius, seems to have had many more doubts about the feasibility of the expedition. Yet things progressed with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. A dream first dissuaded Xerxes from his mission, and then a new one made him change his mind.⁴ Whether imaginary or not, the use of disturbing dreams by Herodotus is perfectly credible from a psychological viewpoint. It is believable that the memory of the Persians slaughtered at Marathon, his father Darius's desire to avenge them, and his duties as a sovereign might have haunted Xerxes with sleepless nights and nightmares.

It is easy, after centuries of historical distortion, to see the Persians as barbarians and the Greeks as civilized, the former with only numbers on their side, the latter blessed with sophistication, intelligence, and bravery. In reality, the core of the Persian army had more in common with the Greeks, at least linguistically since both were Indo-European, than, for instance, the Carthaginians later had with the Romans. Moreover, Herodotus and others leave no doubt about the bravery of the invaders—those “man-destroying horsemen of Persia,” as a contemporary of the Great Wars, Simonides of Ceos, would remember.⁵ Nor was the expedition prepared carelessly. Xerxes went back to Mardonius's 492 plan—to invade from the north in a gradual, methodical way. He spent some three years digging a canal at the Akte peninsula so that the sea disaster of 492 would not be repeated. Moreover, he spent about five years assembling his army and navy. Antiquity had never seen anything like it—not even the great campaigns of the Egyptian pharaohs or of the mighty Assyrians.

The Great Wars were crucial in the history of Western civilization for a number of reasons. In military terms, they restated old problems and brought to light new issues—the importance of terrain, the need for careful logistics, the confrontation between speed and power and between missile and impact, the importance of the sea, and the necessity and difficulty of combining operations between various sectors of the army and between the army and the navy. In ideological terms, the Great Wars became a symbol of the struggle between slavery and freedom, democracy and authoritarianism, and the West and the East. Thus, they set a tradition that would both enlighten and curse Western civilization. And they provided the most important scenario for one of the great books of our collective literature—Herodotus's *Histories*.

The multitude of the advancing Persian army on the move to Greece was very much like the swarm of grasshoppers of the enemies of the Egyptians at Kadesh. The suggestion that they numbered in the millions (2,100,000 for the army, 541,610 for the navy, and about double this amount for the camp followers⁶) has to be discarded. It is more realistic to assume that the Persian army consisted of about 200,000 infantrymen and 75,000 horse-

men,⁷ although J. M. Balcer has recently claimed that “the Persian forces were not vastly superior in number . . . but about equal to those of the Greeks.”⁸ The number of sailors on the 1,207 ships⁹ is more acceptable. But even in these reduced numbers, the Persians were still without doubt the largest army the ancient world had ever seen. The soldiers of the Persian Empire came from all corners of the land—Indians from the southeastern parts, Bactrians from the northeast, Egyptians and Ethiopians from Africa, Sacae from the Russian steppes, Medes and Persians from the Iranian lands, and even Greeks from Ionia. Indeed, according to Herodotus, there were 46 different ethnic units.¹⁰

Herodotus presents the march of the mighty Persian army like a crescendo that strikes increasing terror as it is first conceived, then organized, and finally begins its advance toward the northern border of Hellas. Even before his soldiers began moving, Xerxes ordered the Hellespont to be bridged from the shores of Asia Minor to the shores of Thrace. When a storm destroyed the construction, he commanded that the waters be scourged with three hundred lashes and fetters thrown into the sea.¹¹ Soon after, two new bridges, made up of ships tied together (certainly a technological marvel of the ancient world), were built to allow Xerxes and his men to cross the Hellespont into Europe.¹²

If the safety of his army was uppermost in Xerxes' mind at the Hellespont, what worried him most at the Akte peninsula, where Mount Athos stands, was the safety of his navy. For it was there that, in 492, the first fleet sent by his father, Darius, had been destroyed by a storm. Consequently, instead of trusting the treacherous waters around the peninsula, Xerxes ordered a canal to be cut across the land.¹³ He spent about three years doing this: This invader was clearly not in a hurry. Every stage of his progress seemed to follow a rational course, designed to keep his invading force intact and to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies (Figure 2.1).

Nothing could dissuade him from his mission. On the way from Sardis in Asia Minor to Abydos near the bridges on the Hellespont, something terrifying happened: “The sun left his place in heaven and was unseen . . . and the day was turned into night”; yet the Persian magicians interpreted the vision as “the gods . . . showing to the Greeks the desolation of their cities.”¹⁴ When Xerxes first met one of his many hosts, Pythius the Lydian, he was magnanimous, but when Pythius tried to play on the king's generosity to exempt the eldest of his five sons from serving in the Persian army, Xerxes became very angry. He gave orders to find the oldest of Pythius's sons, to “cut him asunder, then having so done to set the one half of his body on the right hand of the road and the other on the left, that the army might pass this way between them.”¹⁵ It was a dramatic restatement of the message that the Persian's mission was ineluctable—both a signal for his own soldiers and a warning for Hellas.

"The professed intent of the king's march was to attack Athens," Herodotus tells us, "but in truth all Hellas was his aim." Yet not all Greeks "regarded the matter alike."¹⁶ Some *medized*, that is, they submitted to the Persians and paid the usual symbols of submission, "earth and water";¹⁷ others sat on the fence. But the two main powers and the Great King's primary targets—Athens and Sparta—had no choice: They were not offered a chance to submit. As a result, Athens and Sparta began to take steps to oppose the invaders, as a host of smaller cities would do in their turn. First, they sent 10,000 hoplites to the Tempe gorge in Thessaly, in the northern part of Greece. These troops were quickly withdrawn, however, after the Greeks were warned that their position at Tempe could be outflanked through the hills and by the sea.¹⁸ Then the Greek allies gathered together in consultation at Corinth and decided to concede the north and to concentrate their forces at Thermopylae in order to defend central Greece (Figure 3.1).¹⁹ For the most part, that decision was wise both strategically and tactically. If the Greeks had been defeated at Tempe, the result would have been annihilation in the open plains at the back of the gorge. Moreover, the key to the whole war—defeating the more numerous Persian fleet—would have been impossible in the open waters of the northern Aegean on Tempe's right flank. Taking a stand at Thermopylae instead made much more sense. The only problem was that this decision, however wise, would be carried out in a careless and thoughtless manner.²⁰

Thermopylae

On paper, there could not have been a better choice for a battlefield than Thermopylae. Symbolically, the pass there represented the gateway into Greece proper ("the foreigners' passage into Hellas"²¹). Logistically, Thermopylae was near the core of the Greek heartland. Tactically, it provided the right advantage to troops vastly outnumbered by their enemy. And strategically, it was ideal for cooperation between land and sea forces. The Greek fleet had poised itself on the northern tip of the island of Euboea, near the mainland and not far from Thermopylae and thus on the flank of the enemy ships. It posed a danger that the Persian fleet could neither bypass nor ignore. Moreover, the pass was a land route that Xerxes could not avoid unless he was prepared to follow the road around the city of Trachis, which would have been even more difficult and which lay farther from the supply line provided by his ships. The problem, however, was that the delegates gathered at Corinth who had reached the decision to stand at Thermopylae were, according to Herodotus, unaware that the pass could be outflanked.²²

It was August 18, 480 B.C., when Xerxes arrived on the beaches of the Malian Gulf near the entrance of the pass.²³ By then, the commander of the Greek forces, the Spartan king Leonidas, had already arrived, probably on

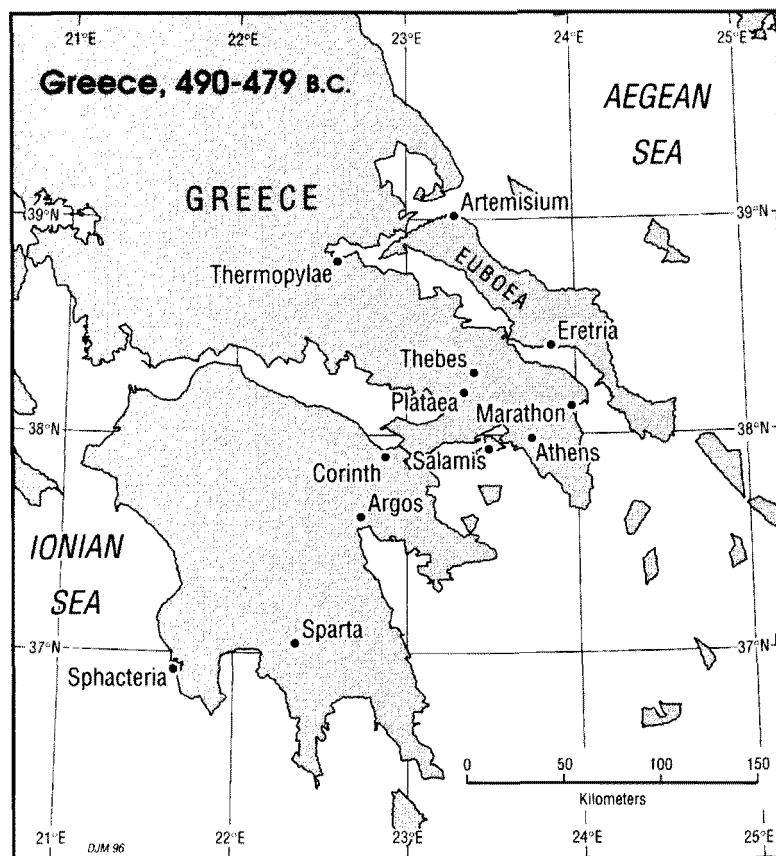


FIGURE 3.1

August 16, and placed his army at the Middle Gate, one of three possible positions. It was a good choice. The West Gate at the entrance of the pass was very small, but the flanking hills could have been easily scaled. The same was true of the East Gate, near the village of Alpeni. The Middle Gate instead was situated with an inaccessible mountain, the Zastamo, on the left of the Greek host and the sea on the right. Moreover, the advance of the hostile army could also be retarded by the presence of a wall that the Phocians had built in the past as a defense against the Malians, their traditional enemies (Figure 3.2). The wall was in disrepair, but Leonidas soon set his men to repairing it.

The Persian king waited four days before launching his first attack, “ever expecting that the Greeks would take to flight.”²⁴ That Xerxes expected them to do so seems understandable, but the delay was probably due to other factors as well. It likely took a day or two for the rest of his advanc-

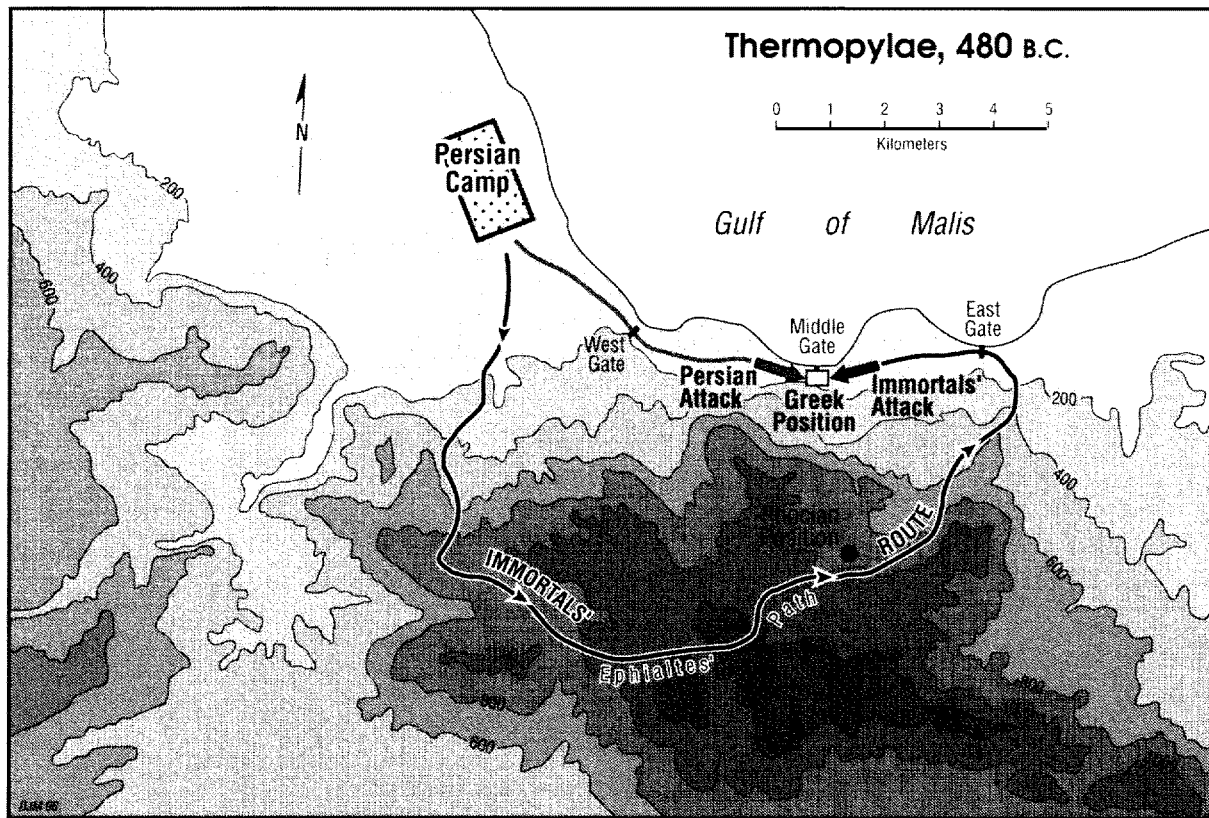


FIGURE 3.2

ing column to arrive and to rest before battle. Also, he might have felt vulnerable without support on his left since the Persian fleet was still farther north, detained there by a tempest that apparently began one day before Xerxes' arrival and would continue for two more. Finally, if there was a storm on the sea nearby, it is likely that the weather ashore was also bad, making an early attack impossible.²⁵

Xerxes' army, even when we scale down Herodotus's figures to less than 300,000, was still very large and vastly superior to the opposing Greek forces. Initially, there were about 7,000 Greeks, almost evenly divided in terms of geographical origin: 3,100 from central Greece (700 Thespians, 400 Thebans, 1,000 Locrians, and 1,000 Phocians) and between 3,800 and 4,000 Peloponnesians (1,000 Spartans, 500 Tegeans, 500 Mantineans, 120 from Orchomenus, 1,000 from Arcadia, 400 Corinthians, 200 from Phlius, and 80 Mycenaeans).²⁶

Herodotus gives contradictory evidence on the size of the Spartan contingent. He says that at Thermopylae, there were originally 3,100 Peloponnesians and that 300 of those were Spartans.²⁷ However, the inscription of Simonides of Ceos, quoted by Herodotus, mentions 4,000 Peloponnesians, leaving another 700 to 900 men unaccounted for.²⁸

As Herodotus's narrative suggests, the 300 men that tradition sanctified were Spartiates, that is, full citizens of the state—probably some of them belonging to the *hippeis*, the traditional bodyguard of the king, and half from other segments of the Spartiate citizenry.²⁹ However, if the Spartan tradition chose to ignore the other 700 and to leave their names out of the monument that they later erected at Sparta for their 300,³⁰ it must have been because they did not fit into their state socially. In other words, the 700 must have been *perioeci*, members of the second level of the social structure of the Spartan state. The *perioeci*, unlike those in the third level, the *helots*, were free men but not citizens and were increasingly used in Sparta's military enterprises. That the Spartan tradition forgot them and that Herodotus followed suit by not mentioning them is no surprise. People who did not share the same rights as the owners of power would not be given the honor and prestige of their "masters."

On August 22, the morning of the fifth day after his arrival, Xerxes, deeming that the Greeks at Thermopylae were showing nothing but "shamelessness" and "folly," was "angered" and dispatched two of his best troops, the Medes and Cissians, to the attack.³¹ In reality, it is likely that by then, his full army had arrived and rested, the weather had improved, and his fleet had already been engaged once on his left flank off the island of Euboea.

The Medes and Cissians could make no headway, so Xerxes ordered the advance of his very best troops, the Immortals, so called because, regardless of casualties, new recruits would always keep their number to 10,000 sol-

diers. Xerxes envisaged “short and easy work of the Greeks,” but he was disappointed: The Immortals “fared neither better nor worse than the Median soldiery.”³²

“This battle lasted all day,”³³ yet when the August sun disappeared from the summer sky, nothing had been accomplished for the Persian king. The next morning, he again sent his troops to attack, but the story of the previous day repeated itself. In the restricted conditions of the pass, numbers seemed to matter little. The Greeks, 6,000 in number (for 1,000 had been dispatched to guard an outflanking path in the mountains), were able to send one group after another to relieve the pressure and the fatigue of those fighting on the first line. Moreover, although it would probably be unwise to accept Herodotus’s definition of the Greeks as “skilled” warriors fighting against the “unskilled” Persians,³⁴ it certainly makes sense to concede Herodotus’s argument on Greek superiority in hand-to-hand battle. The Persians were probably unable to effectively use their long-range weapons, bows and javelins, because of the limited space for maneuvering and the excellent protection worn by the Greek troops (armor, helmet, large shield, and so on). This meant that they were compelled to meet the Greeks face to face. In such a situation, they could not but lose. “Their shorter spears”³⁵ and wider files in offense³⁶ and their “small round or irregularly shaped shields”³⁷ in defense could make no headway against the longer spears of the closely arrayed Greeks, “their entire bodies protected by large shields.”³⁸ The Persians could have had the “advantage in open fields, since they were . . . enabled to move more easily,” but not “in narrow space” against enemies “formed in close ranks.”³⁹

Yet there was a storm brewing on the Greeks’ horizon. The leaders who met at Corinth and chose Thermopylae as their battlefield apparently were unaware of the existence of an outflanking path. Once on the spot, Leonidas became aware of the situation and sent 1,000 men—the Phocians who were native to the area—to guard the route. But it seems that a local Greek named Ephialtes (son of Eurydemus, a Malian and thus a traditional enemy of the Phocians) gave this information to Xerxes too. In response, the Persian king sent the Immortals under Hydarnes “forthwith,”⁴⁰ which probably meant toward the end of the second day of battle. The last stage of the fight had begun.

At dawn of the next day, the Immortals arrived on the summit of the pass. There, they suddenly came face to face with the Phocians. Both sides were surprised, but the Phocians misread the situation completely and withdrew to the top of the mountain: They thought that Hydarnes’ men had come specifically for them, not to outflank the Greeks at the pass. It was a terrible mistake. When the Phocians withdrew, Hydarnes recalled his men who were poised for an attack and sent them instead again along the path. The last obstacle to the success of Xerxes’ men had been overcome.

Leonidas was given three warnings of the approaching Immortals: first by a seer, Megistias, then during the night by deserters from the Persian camp, and finally by "watchers running down from the heights when day was . . . dawning."⁴¹ The Greeks held no council of war until the last warning was received. Then they decided, either by consensus or because of Leonidas's insistence, that most of the 6,000 troops would return to their cities before encirclement occurred. The only ones remaining behind would have been the Spartans, the Thespians, and the Thebans, originally 2,100 men, although we do not know how many had been killed after two days of fighting.

Two questions spring immediately to mind. Why was the council of war held so late? And why did not all the troops leave? Leonidas had been informed of the impending encirclement during the night and certainly could have called the council earlier, but we must assume, in spite of what Megistias and the deserters said, that he did not believe the deserters or that he hoped the Phocians could stop the Immortals. In either case, he erred. A wise general would have spared at least a few troops to bolster the Phocians.

Leonidas's decision to remain and fight would later be explained in a number of ways: He could not defy the laws of Sparta that had sent him to defend the pass;⁴² the Delphic oracle had told him that his state could be saved only if he gave up his life fighting for it;⁴³ he had intended from the very beginning "to die for the freedom of all";⁴⁴ and he wanted to preserve the glory only for himself and the Spartans.⁴⁵

But the truth is that there were no laws at Sparta that decreed a man should uselessly sacrifice his life.⁴⁶ And the Delphic oracle was clearly a *vaticinium post eventum* (prediction made after the event), created to enhance Delphi's credibility.⁴⁷ The fight for freedom was a strong ethic among the Greeks during the Great Wars, but why should one sacrifice one's life rather than live and fight another day? In suggesting that Leonidas wanted to keep the glory for himself and the Spartans, Herodotus has let his anti-Spartan feelings surface. Finally, the assumption that Leonidas remained because Thermopylae and the battle at sea near Artemisium were inextricably tied is only partially correct.⁴⁸ It was so only as long as Leonidas had a fair chance of winning, but after the encirclement, with 2,100 or fewer men at his disposal, it would have been only a matter of hours before the beach fell into Persian hands.

Yet Leonidas had no choice but to remain. He had called his meeting too late, and any withdrawal of the whole army during the day would have been impossible. The Greeks could easily have fallen prey to the more mobile Persians, and the whole affair would have ended in massacre for everybody. Even if he survived, Leonidas would have found nothing but dishonor at Sparta.⁴⁹ A Spartan general could certainly withdraw from a difficult position (Pausanias would do this, for instance, a year later at

Plataea) but only if he kept his army intact. Withdrawal in the face of the Persians could have resulted in nothing but slaughter at Thermopylae. In other words, this man Leonidas, who so far had made a number of bad decisions, finally chose the right one: He stayed behind to protect the greater part of his forces.

The battle of the third day opened in the morning after Xerxes offered libations to the sunrise. This time, however, Leonidas did not keep his men within the confines of the protecting wall but advanced them to where the pass widens in order to kill as many enemies as possible. Leonidas fell, and a brutal fight took place over his body. The Greeks had to chase the Persians away four times before they were able to retrieve their commander's body.

The Immortals must have reached the beach by the afternoon, but just before that, the remaining Spartiates, perioeci, and Thespians decided to withdraw to a small hillock for their last stand. The Thebans did not follow them out and apparently surrendered, although we probably should not accept Herodotus's interpretation of their decision.⁵⁰

The remaining Greeks were quickly surrounded on the hillock. Their spears by now all broken, they defended themselves with their swords and even with their fists and teeth until "the foreigners overwhelmed them with missile weapons, some attacking them in front and throwing down the wall of defence, and others standing around in a ring."⁵¹

Hans Delbrück claims that the Greeks at Thermopylae made two serious mistakes: They chose the wrong spot to face the Persian army (it would have been better, he says, to wait for them at the exit of the pass where the whole Persian host, not just a few men, could have been destroyed), and they sent too few soldiers.⁵² The controversy over the number of men is also tied to Sparta's responsibility in committing so few of her soldiers to stop the invaders. Scholars have advanced a number of explanations for this—lack of leadership; faulty organization; reluctance on the part of the Peloponnesians to leave their fields in the midst of summer, with the harvest approaching; a prohibition against waging war in a period of festivals, such as the Karneian at Sparta and the Olympic elsewhere; and possibly a deliberate plan by the Peloponnesians, who, being from southern Greece, may have had no intention of stopping the Persians at Thermopylae, preferring instead to preserve their best effort for the Isthmus of Corinth.⁵³

It is appealing to regard Thermopylae as secondary in the Greek strategic plan. After all, the real fight occurred at sea, not on land. No Athenians fought at Thermopylae; they, of course, were all with the fleet, where their city, Athens, had invested a large number of ships and men.⁵⁴

It is likely that the Greek host as a whole regarded the fleet as the most important part of its effort at that stage. Victory on land would not have ended the Persian threat, but victory at sea could have rendered Xerxes' army helpless. With his supply line shattered, he would have been left in the

middle of a hostile country and in a landscape often barren and barely fertile enough to support the local inhabitants. Yet it is clear that the fight at Thermopylae had a particular significance for the Greeks. It was a matter of psychology and emotion, more than of strategy. No fleet could remain long at sea without beaching.⁵⁵ Moreover, a land victory for the Persians would have left the lands, cities, homes, women, and children of central Greece at the mercy of the invaders. It is no surprise then that when the Greek fleet heard of the outcome at Thermopylae and with their fight at sea ending more or less in a draw, they wisely decided to set the prow of their ships toward more southern shores.⁵⁶ But if all this is correct, why then did the Greek states and especially Sparta send so few men? Herodotus mentions, among other explanations, the festivals.⁵⁷ However, this excuse is suspect. It is true that hostilities might stop during festivals; after all, a religious festival, again probably the Karneia, had already prevented the Spartans from sending their troops in time to face the Persians at Marathon.⁵⁸ But the urgency of the situation and the fear of an impious enemy should certainly have forced the Spartans to give up their religious objections, especially since they had already made an exception by sending 1,000 men.⁵⁹ It is not that religious motivation should be taken lightly, as Delbrück suggests,⁶⁰ but only that in this case, the religious motivation for not sending enough troops is at least suspect.

We should also be careful not to accept without question the explanation given by A. Daskalakis.⁶¹ Sparta, he says, sent a token force deliberately because its leaders, like most Peloponnesians, were worried that after an initial defeat, there would not have been enough forces to fight on. In any case, Sparta may have felt that it was better to put most of its forces closer to home at the Isthmus of Corinth. It is, of course, unlikely that Sparta would have sent all of its forces to fight so far away from home at this stage since the defense of the isthmus was clearly more appealing. But it is unlikely that Sparta acted in bad faith.

As consummate practitioners of war, the Spartans must have been well aware that an early defeat could deliver a crushing blow to the whole enterprise. Moreover, the Greek state and especially Sparta could not afford to lose 300 Spartiates, some of them among the most respected of their state, and 700 perioeci. Finally, there was still the possibility that any evidence of bad faith on the part of the Spartans might have convinced more Greek cities to submit to the Persians.⁶² There is no reason to doubt that Sparta was serious about the importance of the fight. Thus, its reluctance to send a larger force had to be due to other factors: the pressure of agricultural needs in a crucial part of the summer, a lack of proper management of its forces, even the excuse of the Karneian festival to reinforce its decision psychologically, and probably most compelling of all the belief that the men sent (4,000 with the other Peloponnesians) plus the over 3,000 from central

Greece would have been enough to stop the Persians. This point is made clear in Herodotus, for instance.⁶³ The problem was not that there were not enough men at Leonidas's disposal. It was that, once he became aware of the existence of the outlying path, he did not place enough soldiers to guard it. The decision to use the Phocians for this job was excellent because they lived in the area, but he also could have reinforced them with a contingent of his best troops—Spartiates, perioeci, or even other Peloponnesians. That the Spartans, who were used to fighting in close ranks, could have found themselves incapable of performing well in the broken terrain of the path is not a valid excuse. Any soldiers who were able to "turn their backs and feign flight" at the pass and then turn upon the foreigners when they were overtaken,⁶⁴ as the Spartans did, could very well have faced the Immortals in any terrain. Moreover, their presence would have guaranteed a more appropriate response when the Phocians finally came face to face with Hydnarnes' men.

The third day of battle at Thermopylae coincided with a sea battle nearby Artemisium, off the island of Euboea. Unlike the land forces, the Greek fleet not only survived but, helped by the ravages of a sea storm during the previous day, also came out with either a narrow victory or at least a draw in the confrontation. Yet the Persian fleet was still superior in number; therefore, with the beaches now in enemy hands and with the enemy army near the gates of Athens, the Greeks decided to withdraw.⁶⁵ The situation seemed desperate. Yet most of the Greek land forces were intact, and the fleet soon would be able to wage the fight again. Less than one month later, the two sides would meet at Salamis. This time, the battle would be waged only at sea.

Salamis

Athens, one of the two main targets of Xerxes' wrath against which "all Asia's strength/Has gone off behind its young master,"⁶⁶ had not a single soldier at Thermopylae. Herodotus implies that the Athenians believed from the beginning that the war would be decided at sea. Although the historian's account is at times confused and illogical,⁶⁷ there is little reason to doubt that the Athenians held to this policy from the beginning. A year or so before the war, Themistocles had convinced the Athenians to invest the windfall they obtained from the exploitation of the Laurium silver mines in the construction of a large fleet.⁶⁸ And indeed, the Athenians would provide almost two-thirds of the 400 Greek ships present at Salamis.⁶⁹

When the Persian army had crossed the Hellespont on its way toward Greece, it is true that the Greeks at Tempe initially had a number of Athenians among them.⁷⁰ It is also true, however, that the general plan of the Greeks was unclear at this point because the Tempe position could be easily

outflanked by land or by sea and because there was no possibility for the much smaller Greek fleet to pose a serious threat to the Persian navy in the open waters off the Tempe coast.

After Tempe, the Athenians' policy was consistent. They had concentrated about half of their naval strength at the battle of Artemisium,⁷¹ they had abandoned Athens to the Persians after Thermopylae instead of facing them on land, and they would desperately insist on keeping the ships at Salamis for a confrontation with the Persians. Their plan was correct. Waging a pitched battle that, like Marathon ten years earlier, would end the Persian invasion was an unrealistic goal at this stage. The Persian forces of 490 B.C. were, without doubt, infinitely inferior to Xerxes' expedition even if we dismiss Herodotus's claim that there were millions of Persians and assume instead that the invading force numbered 200,000 to 300,000. No land success could have lasting value as long as the umbilical cord tying the army to its lifeline at sea was untouched. A large army could not survive long in a hostile, largely infertile territory once the food supply provided by the fleet was disrupted. It would then have been necessary to reduce the size of the army, and, in turn, this reduction would make possible a definitive Greek victory on land.

Such a situation had been on the Persian mind from the very beginning: "If they attack in their ships and prevail in a sea-fight," argued Xerxes' uncle, Artabanus, in his efforts to discourage the expedition, "and then sail to the Hellespont and thereafter break your bridge, that, O king is the hour of peril."⁷² Even if we dismiss Artabanus's argument as a clever invention on the part of Herodotus, it is clear that Xerxes was aware from the very beginning that his large army could survive only as long as his fleet controlled the sea. Therefore, he took many precautions to assure the safety of both his navy and his army. For the navy, he had cut a canal across the Akte peninsula off Mount Athos so it could avoid venturing into the treacherous waters around the cape. For the army, he had built a bridge across the Hellespont. Among the reasons why he delayed his attack at Thermopylae could also have been his awareness that his fleet was still too far away to provide support to the left flank. Finally, after Xerxes was defeated at Salamis, there is little reason to doubt that one of the reasons for his speedy departure for Asia was exactly what Herodotus suggests: "He feared lest the Greeks (by Ionian counsel or their own devising) might sail to the Hellespont to break his bridges, and he might be cut off in Europe and in peril of his life; and so he planned flight."⁷³

The Greek decision to make a stand at Salamis was a superb choice (Figure 3.3).⁷⁴ After Thermopylae and Artemisium and the Persian advance into central Greece, the Greek land army, with desperation in their hearts, prepared for a last stand at the bottleneck of the Isthmus of Corinth. They encamped there, broke the road leading into it, and decided to build a defensive wall

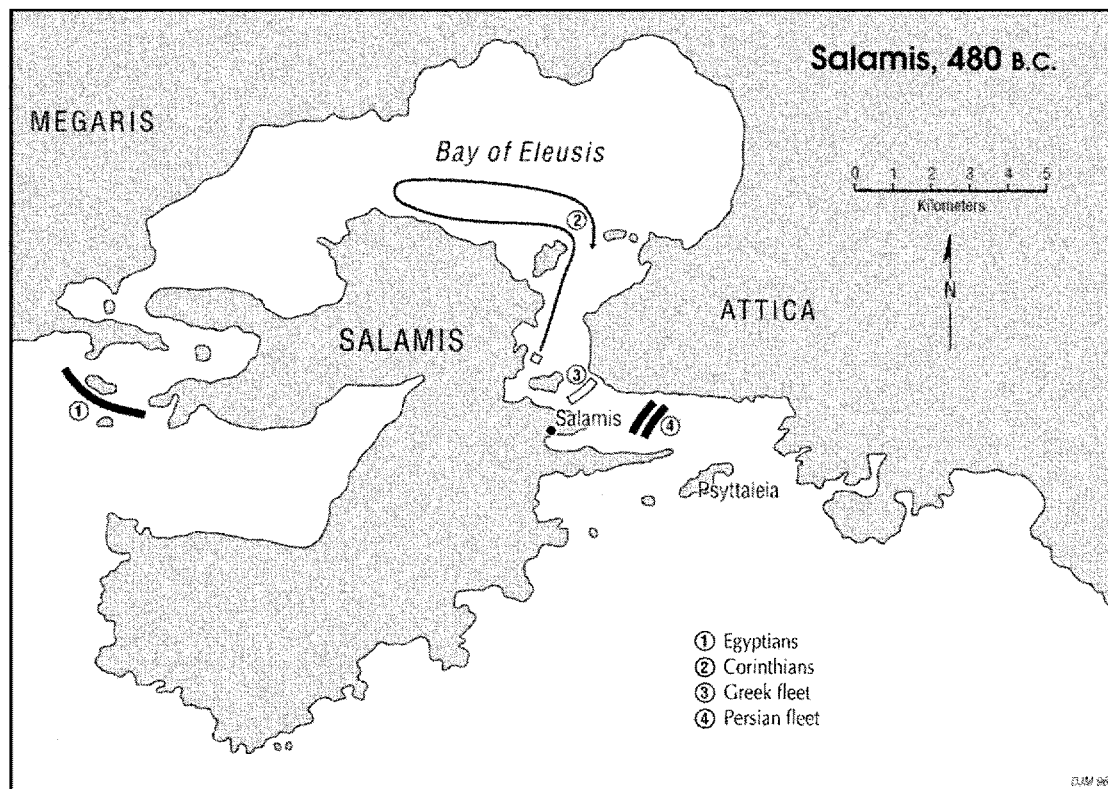


FIGURE 3.3

across the isthmus.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the Greek fleet stood about 52 kilometers farther east on the island of Salamis in a flanking position that the Persians could not ignore.⁷⁶ Salamis suited the Greek designs well. If a battle were waged, it would have been on their own terms—in narrow waters where their inferiority in numbers would not have been a handicap, regardless of whether the battle itself was mainly a boarding or a ramming affair.

Persian options were few and limited.⁷⁷ They could ignore the Greeks' threat by landing near Argos, Sparta's old enemy, not far away from the Isthmus of Corinth, at the same time that their army advanced on land. This possibility may have convinced the Argives to side with the Persians, thereby placing the Greek army near Corinth and Sparta itself in great jeopardy. However, such a plan would have been dangerous for the Persian supply line since the Greeks could have harassed the enemy fleet from flank and rear. Another option would have been to bottle up the Greeks on Salamis by guarding the exits and to move the rest of the Persian fleet to the Peloponnese. Again, this move would have been unwise because the Persians would have split their sea forces in three (one portion moved to the Peloponnese and the rest divided between the two exits); they would thus have opened themselves to be defeated piecemeal. The plan possibly could have worked when their fleet was at full strength before Artemisium, but it seemed unfeasible after the losses suffered in sea battles and during the storm. The remaining options were either to attack or to do nothing. Delay could have worked in the Persians' favor. It was likely that, in time, the frail unity of the Greek host would shatter. Yet in the end, Xerxes was left only with the option of attacking. Time was working in the Greeks' favor because by September, the campaigning season was drawing to a close and because Xerxes' supply line was increasingly fragile.⁷⁸

Although making a stand at Salamis was ideal for the Greeks, the decision to remain and fight there was never a foregone conclusion. The Peloponnesian contingent, which included the Greeks from cities free of Persian control, strongly urged withdrawal. First of all, there was the matter of the Persians' overwhelming numbers, even if we do not accept the traditional count of over 1,200 fighting ships for the Persians against the less than 400 for the Greek.⁷⁹ Moreover, there were other fears and concerns in the minds of the Peloponnesians.⁸⁰ They were afraid of being besieged on a small island if the Persians succeeded in blocking the exits. They also had no desire to defend a land, Attica, that had already fallen under Persian control. They wanted to wage battle near the isthmus; their troops were deployed to stop the Persian invaders there, and a Persian attack could hardly succeed on that small strip of land since the road there had been broken and a defensive wall was being built. It was at this stage that Themistocles, like Miltiades at Marathon, emerged as the person whose foresight and cunning would make possible what seemed unattainable by normal means.

Themistocles was probably 44 years of age in 480 B.C.⁸¹ The son of an aristocrat and probably of a non-Athenian mother, he seemed to have risen to a position of prestige in the Athenian community only on the eve of Xerxes' invasion. Thucydides had no doubts about the genius of the man: Themistocles, he says, was able to grasp an emergency situation "at the shortest notice"; he had "shrewd judgement"; he could assess "the advantages and disadvantages of a course in the still uncertain future"; in sum, Thucydides tells us, "by natural power and speed in reflection, he was the best of all men at determining promptly what had to be done."⁸²

That Themistocles finally reached his goal—to stand and fight at Salamis—was the result of personal energy, psychological endurance, and trickery, a typical combination of the traits of this complex man. But even at the last moment, it was not certain that the Peloponnesians would remain and fight. Faced with the possibility of their desertion, Themistocles resorted to a clever stratagem: He had to convince the Persians to attack before the Peloponnesians left him. He therefore sent "a man in a boat" to the Persian fleet, warning them that the Greeks had decided to withdraw because they "have lost heart."⁸³ C. Hignett has doubts about the veracity of the account,⁸⁴ but there is really very little reason to discount Herodotus's words on this, especially since they are confirmed in Aeschylus. The playwright, who was present at the battle, also mentions that a Greek from the Athenian camp warned Xerxes that "once the darkness and the black of night should come,/the Greeks would not remain, but to their rowers' seats/would leap in disarray, each man for himself,/and run away in secret flight to save their lives." To catch this fleet "in disarray" and destroy it, Xerxes decided to close all the exits.⁸⁵

The sequence of events is unclear in both Aeschylus, who may have fought on an Athenian ship, and in Herodotus, who, a small child of about 4 at the time of the battle, probably wrote when some of the veterans of the fight were still alive. But it seems reasonable to assume that once Xerxes accepted the veracity of Themistocles' message, he ordered an attack. First, his sailors had supper, and then, under the cover of night, his fleet, divided into three groups, was sent to close the exits.⁸⁶ Although our other source, Diodorus Siculus, is clearly a synthesis of the works of other writers (especially the historian Ephorus⁸⁷), it seems prudent to agree with him that the Egyptian contingent of the Persian fleet, which had fought so well at Artemisium, must have been sent around the island of Salamis to block the western exit. The other contingents, Phoenician, Cypriot, and Ionian, must have entered the straits from the two exits off the island of Psyttaleia, which splits Salamis from the mainland at the eastern side. As Aeschylus says, "All night long the masters of the ships maintained/the sailing back and forth by all the naval host."⁸⁸ They waited for the Greek ships to break through their line. Anticipating that most of the sailors of wrecked enemy

ships would have tried to escape on the shores of Psyttaleia, Xerxes had a contingent of Persian troops land there,⁸⁹ 400 men according to Pausanias,⁹⁰ to save any Persians who escaped drowning and to slay any Greeks who escaped from his men.⁹¹ But the night wore on, and no Greek ship appeared in the dark. By then, the Persian fleet must have stretched from the shores of Salamis to those of Attica.

The Greeks were aware of the nocturnal maneuvers of the Persian navy, but it took Themistocles a long time to convince the others that there was a Persian attack in the offing.⁹² According to Herodotus, he spoke to the sailors before they boarded their ships.⁹³ It is an unlikely story both because of the pressure of time and because the obvious person to deliver a speech would have been the Spartan admiral Eurybiades, not Themistocles. But in any case, by the time dawn broke on a day some three weeks after the end of the battles of Thermopylae and Artemisium, the Greeks too were ready on their ships. Their line must have stretched roughly parallel to and been as long as that of the Persians, although not as deep. The only Greeks initially missing from the line were the Corinthians, who probably had been sent to guard the rear.⁹⁴ Soon, however, when the Egyptian attack did not take place (and it could not since Xerxes' order had been to close the exit, not to attack), the Corinthians too must have joined the battle.⁹⁵

The sea must have been shrouded in mist when "the white-horsed chariots of dawn appeared/and filled the entire earth with radiance to behold"⁹⁶ because the Persians did not see the Greek ships. But they received a sure signal that their enemies were lined up for battle when they heard the Greek war song, the paean—"a sound, shouting from the Greeks,/a joyful song, and to it making shrill response,/from the island rocks about there came an antiphony of echoes."⁹⁷ Soon after the paean, the Greek fleet appeared before the Persian eyes: "Quickly all of them were visible to sight."⁹⁸ The Greeks had the element of surprise on their side.

The Athenian ships manned the left and left center of the line, and the 30 Aiginetan ships had the extreme right with 20 Megarian and 16 Spartan ships next to them. The Persian fleet had the Phoenician ships on the right, the Cypriots, Pamphylians, and Lycians next to them, and the Ionian and other Greek ships on the left.⁹⁹

At the beginning, the Greek fleet started to retreat, and the invaders rushed upon them in pursuit. At a certain point, however, as Herodotus indicates, a single Athenian ship stopped retreating, reversed oars, and rammed an enemy ship. Others soon followed suit.¹⁰⁰ Aeschylus has a different story: It was the right wing and thus by implication the Aiginetans who were the first to attack, he says.¹⁰¹ One might argue that Herodotus and Aeschylus describe the same action but from different viewpoints—right from the Greek side (Aeschylus), left from the Persian side (Herodotus) as J. S. Morrison suggests.¹⁰² However, this would still create

problems on the issue of which was the first Greek ship to attack. It seems more reasonable to accept another tradition that Herodotus also mentions,¹⁰³ namely, that an Aeginetan ship began the attack.

The two principal methods of fighting sea battles in antiquity were boarding or ramming. Boarding represented an attempt to re-create a land battle on the decks of ships. Thucydides gives a splendid description of such an encounter at the battle of Sybota in 432 B.C. between the fleets of Corinth and Corcyra. "When the standards were raised on either side," he writes, "they [the ships] joined battle, both having hoplites on the decks as well as many archers and the javelin-men, for they were still rather rudely fighting in the ancient fashion. And so the sea-fight was hotly contested, not so much by reason of the skill displayed as because it was more like a battle on land." The reason behind this system of fighting was that the contestants "trusted for victory to the hoplites on the decks who stood and fought while the ships remained motionless." It was a matter of "brute strength rather than . . . skill."¹⁰⁴ Ramming, which involved using a bronze prow in the shape of a swordfish, was designed to disable enemy ships by breaking their oars or to sink them by tearing a hole in their hulls.

Of the two methods, ramming was more suitable to the Greek ships at Salamis. They were lower in the water and probably smaller and sturdier than their opponents'.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in the restricted waters of the narrows, the Phoenicians' superior seafaring skill came to naught, and the Persian fleet's numerical superiority did not mean much when one could deploy at best only 80 triremes in line-abreast formation in the 1,200 meters of the channel.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the fresh crews of the Greek ships were able to nullify the potentially faster ships of the enemy, which had been at sea for many hours by the time of the confrontation.¹⁰⁷ By contrast, boarding suited the Persians. If the opposing ships were compared on the basis of their fighting potential, a Persian boat would have a numerical advantage of almost 2 to 1 over a Greek trireme. This was because the number of fighting men on Greek ships was, apart from exceptional circumstances, between 14 and 18 (4 archers and 10 or 14 spearmen or javelinmen),¹⁰⁸ while, as Herodotus mentions, on each Persian boat, "there were thirty fighting men of the Persians and Medes and Sacae."¹⁰⁹

The Greek fleet's sudden movement forward caught the enemy by surprise. "Immediately ship struck its brazen-plate beak/on ship." At the beginning, "the Persian force withstood the shocks,"¹¹⁰ but soon "the shores of Salamis and all the coast around" would be "full of corpses of men most miserably destroyed," "bodies . . . sea drenched and swirling,/bobbing in their robes."¹¹¹

Plutarch also mentions that a breeze caused a swell in the water, adding to the confusion and disorder of the Persian fleet.¹¹² Plutarch is not the most reliable of ancient sources, and G. Smets and A. Dorsin角度-Smets

claim that his statement is not evidence from a traditional early source but a conclusion reached by his knowledge of the battle location.¹¹³ Yet, especially since it is a conclusion that the climate could support, it seems reasonable to believe that the swell did occur, as N.G.L. Hammond does.¹¹⁴ Also, as A. R. Burn argues, there is evidence in Herodotus suggesting the presence of wind during the battle. For instance, in his discussion of the role of the Corinthians, Herodotus says that they hoisted their sails when they departed from the Greek line.¹¹⁵

The battle lasted a long time. It began at the break of dawn;¹¹⁶ it ended in "the eye of black night."¹¹⁷ This implies that it was hard fought, not the kind of quick affair that a cursory reading of both Herodotus and Aeschylus suggests. Aeschylus remarks that, after the first sudden attack, the Persians fought valiantly.¹¹⁸ Later, when the first line of ships was routed and the other lines vainly tried to push forward so that "they too might display their valour,"¹¹⁹ the situation became critical for the Persians: Their ships, disabled by ramming and with their oars sometimes sheared off by their own ships once they had lost control, impeded each other and made impossible the relief of the front line.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, writes Aeschylus, the Greek ships attacked "with perfect plan and order";¹²¹ they "fought orderly and in array," says Herodotus.¹²²

The two opposing lines had begun the battle roughly parallel to each other, stretching along a north-south axis.¹²³ At the first contact, the Greek line probably had become roughly a semicircle in shape, with the Aeginetans on the right embracing the shores of Salamis and closer to the enemy and the Athenians farther west near the Attica coast. This position seems to have been maintained for most of the fight. The breakthrough resulted from a combination of two things: First the Aiginetans defeated their opponents on the right of the Greek line and probably pursued them well into the straits farther east; second, the Athenians must have eventually routed their opponents on the left.

When the enemy left was also routed, the Aiginetans, who by now had disposed of their enemies, closed the trap: "All that escaped from the Athenians fell in their course among the Aeginetans."¹²⁴ At that point, the Greek line probably resembled a circle.¹²⁵ It was also then that the surface of the sea became covered with the sight of overturned ships, "filled as it was with shipwrecks and the slaughter of men."¹²⁶ The beaches and the reefs around "were filled with corpses,"¹²⁷ all was in disarray,¹²⁸ and the Greeks, says the messenger to the Persian queen in Aeschylus's *Persae*, "kept striking us, like tunnies/or a catch of fish, with broken fragments of oars, or bits/of flotsam from the wrecks."¹²⁹ When the Persian ships turned to flee, "most of them were destroyed."¹³⁰

But the last act of the drama had yet not been played. The Persians, stranded on Psyttaleia, still remained. One of the Athenian generals, Aris-

tides, gathered some of the hoplites and other infantrymen who had remained on the shores of Salamis. Covering "their bodies with well-made arms of bronze,"¹³¹ they surrounded the island, pummeled their enemies with rocks and arrows, and finally went in for the kill, slaughtering them one by one—Persians "at their peak of physical condition/stoutest of heart and of outstanding lineage,/and always in the first the Lord [Xerxes] could trust."¹³²

The Greeks sank more than 200 enemy ships, "not including those captured together with their crews."¹³³ They lost only 40 ships themselves, and their casualties too must have been low because the shipwrecked Greeks could swim across to Salamis.¹³⁴ The Persians whose ships were sunk, however, were drowned in the sea either because they could not swim, as Herodotus writes,¹³⁵ or because they could not find safety on the southern shores that lay in the hands of the enemy. Yet the Greeks seemed to have been unaware of the extent of their victory, for they made themselves ready for another assault. This also suggests that Xerxes still had a considerable number of ships that had not been engaged.¹³⁶ But the Greeks were wrong: Xerxes had, in fact, come to the end of his road for the moment. His army's safety and efficiency were tied to his navy. As Barry S. Strauss and Josiah Ober write, the two were "mutually supportive and could not operate independently of each other. The army needed the food carried by the merchant marine, the merchant marine needed the protection of the battle fleet, and the battle fleet needed the secure beachhead established by the army."¹³⁷

Xerxes sent his fleet back to the coast of Asia Minor to avoid the peril of another confrontation with the enemy and to secure supplies and grain for the troops remaining in Greece. His general Mardonius withdrew to Thessaly to spend the winter there with a part of the army, a relatively small host that included Xerxes' best troops—the Immortals, Medes, Persians, Saca, Bactrians, and Indians. The Great King himself hurried back to Sardis in Asia Minor by the land route across the Hellespont, probably accompanied by one-third of the army. His other general, Artabazos, escorted him to the Hellespont, then started to retrace his steps with 60,000 men, says Herodotus, to join Mardonius in Thessaly.¹³⁸ But time would pass before the two generals combined their forces since, en route, Artabazos decided to attack a city that had left the Persian fold.¹³⁹

Plataea

Salamis was without doubt the turning point of the war, but it clearly did not mean certain victory for the Greeks in their struggle against the Persian Empire. The Greeks had shut the Persians off from the Peloponnese, but the large army of the invaders still controlled northern and most of central

Greece. The Greeks had cut their enemy's sea link, but the Persians' land supply line through the Hellespont was still intact and they still could rely on the cooperation, voluntary or coerced, of some important Greeks, such as the Macedonians and most of all the Thebans. The battle of Plataea, fought in 479 B.C., one year after Salamis, was as crucial as Marathon had been eleven years earlier. Defeat at Plataea would have meant the end of Greek hopes for success. It would not have been just another stage in the struggle against the Persians, as had been the case with Thermopylae. At the Thermopylae pass, only a relatively small number of Greek forces had been present at the beginning of battle, and an even smaller group had been involved in the final confrontation. At Plataea, by contrast, more than half the Spartan state was present, with 5,000 hoplites and 35,000 helots,¹⁴⁰ most of the force that Athens could master in a moment of dire emergency—8,000 men¹⁴¹ (compare this to the 9,000 troops present at Marathon)—was there as well. A Persian victory could only mean annihilation for the Greek army. Moreover, there would have been no new troops to replenish the vanquished ranks, as the Romans would have after Cannae. Sparta and Athens had mustered everything they could at the foothills of Mount Cithaeron and Mount Pastra. That is why the confrontation at Plataea—confused as it was and less heroic than Marathon, Thermopylae, or Salamis—is at least as important as the Athenian victory of 490 B.C. or the dramatic sea battle waged between the beaches of Salamis and the coast of Attica in 480 B.C.

Plataea is fraught with difficulty for the historian in spite of the fact that there is no dearth of details on the conflict in Herodotus.¹⁴² For instance, the Greek historian provides a wealth of information on the terrain, but when modern scholars try to make sense of it, doubts begin to outweigh the certainties.¹⁴³ The same applies to the sequence of events once the two armies faced each other on the opposite sides of the Asopos River. Numbers, strangely enough, are less of a problem. We can probably accept Herodotus's computation for the Greeks (38,700 hoplites and 69,500 light infantry¹⁴⁴); we must reject his count of 300,000 barbarians and 50,000 Medizing Greeks plus cavalry for the Persians.¹⁴⁵ A recent estimate puts the strength of Mardonius's host at 60,000 infantrymen and 30,000 cavalrymen,¹⁴⁶ which seems a reasonable assumption even using Herodotus's own evidence. For instance, Herodotus mentions that of the three battle groups, the center, led by Artabazos, had 40,000 soldiers.¹⁴⁷ If we assume a similar number on the left wing (Persians, according to Herodotus) and a smaller contingent on the right (mainly Theban cavalry and Medizing Greeks¹⁴⁸), we have about 100,000 combatants. We should add the various servants and camp followers, but they probably remained in the Persian camp, unlike some of the Spartan followers who, Herodotus suggests, played a role in the final confrontation on the right wing of the Greek line.¹⁴⁹

Yet if our understanding of the details of both terrain and some aspects of the battle is clouded, the main outline of the encounter is clear. Actually, the whole campaign is better understood if it is divided into seven stages. In the first stage, Mardonius, still in Athens, tried to win the war without resorting to force by using bribery and psychological devices. His policy was simple and almost effective: divide and conquer. He first tried to seduce Athens out of its alliance with the other Greek cities. When this failed, he shifted his attentions to Aigina, and when this approach too did not work, he went back to the Athenians.

The second stage began when Mardonius realized that the Athenians could not be convinced to break their alliance and that he had to face all the remaining opponents in the open field. At this point, he withdrew to Boeotia, for a number of reasons. It was closer to an escape route in case of disaster on the battlefield, after which his troops could either take refuge behind the walls of friendly Thebes or advance through Phocis on the way to the Hellespont.¹⁵⁰ The nearness to Thebes also assuaged his worries in terms of supplies, but probably the most important reason for Mardonius's decision to withdraw to Boeotia was that the plains there provided him with terrain suited to the pride of his army, the cavalry.

The opening of the third stage was similar to the first round of a cautious boxing match. The Greeks who had followed Mardonius to Boeotia and the Persians cautiously probed for each other's weaknesses and strengths. With the Greek army deployed in the foothills of Mount Cithaeron, probably in some disarray, Mardonius launched his cavalry against one of the enemy contingents, that of the Megarians.¹⁵¹ The Greeks fought valiantly, but their distress must have increased with the passage of time, exposed as they were to the assault of the Persian horsemen. The Persian cavalry attacked in an orderly, methodical fashion, charging by squadrons and releasing their arrows and javelins before moving away.¹⁵²

The distress of the Megarians (there were probably 3,000 of them present¹⁵³) must have been intense, and when they threatened to withdraw toward safer terrain if they were not relieved, the Athenians came to their assistance with 8,000 men,¹⁵⁴ including a number of archers—800, according to Hignett.¹⁵⁵ "For a long time they fought," but the decisive moment came when an Athenian archer knocked the leader of the Persian cavalry, Masisstius, off his horse. While Masisstius lay on the ground, the Greeks stabbed him but at first could not kill him because his chest was covered with armor underneath his surcoat. Finally, someone stabbed Masisstius in the eye.¹⁵⁶ The encounter ended with the Persians vainly attempting to recover their commander's body by charging en masse.¹⁵⁷

The battle, which involved about one-third of the Greek army (3,000 Megarians and 8,000 Athenians) and probably most of the Persian cavalry (perhaps 20,000 to 25,000 men), taught both contenders valuable lessons.

On terrain where there was no possibility of being outflanked, a body of heavy infantrymen, especially if supported by a few missile units, could be practically unbeatable. Now, the problem for Mardonius was how to entice the Greeks to attack in a terrain more favorable to the Persian army; for the Spartan general Pausanias, the problem was how to place his men in a position that would enhance their characteristics. These concerns were at the core of the plans both commanders made in the fourth stage of the battle.

The fourth stage opened with a series of movements by the Greek host, soon followed by countermoves from the Persians. The main idea for both sides was to provoke the enemy to attack. Actually, it is remarkable how the whole battle seems to have been conducted in the manner of a chess game for a while, much like the intricate maneuvers of the *condottieri* in fifteenth-century Italy—moves and countermoves, probing attacks and counterattacks, switches of initiative from one side to the other, traps set and discovered. The difference is that, unlike the set battles of early Renaissance Italy, the final confrontation at Plataea was a bloodbath where no surrender was possible or even contemplated.

For a time, both commanders thought defensively. Pausanias moved his troops from the security of the foothills because he felt confident of Greek superiority after the fight against the cavalry and because he wished to be close to a better watering place, with the Asopos River and the Gargaphian spring nearby.¹⁵⁸ In reality, he also was trying to entice Mardonius to attack across the Asopos River,¹⁵⁹ a position on top of a ridge with a slight incline¹⁶⁰ that was well suited to a hoplite force, at least for the right wing that the Spartans and the Tegeans manned. Mardonius refused to take the bait. As his inactivity for the next eight days suggests, he too took a defensive stand, expecting the Greeks to attack across the Asopos and thus move into territory suitable to his cavalry and his superior forces.

Both contestants, at least initially, thought that they could wait. Pausanias's army felt confident and safe in the land of their fathers. And the Persians were close to their supply line in Thebes, and, being an army of professionals, they felt sure they could remain there as long as they were fed and paid.¹⁶¹ In reality, however, there were limits to the staying power of both contestants. The Greek army could not stay indefinitely, composed as it was of amateur soldiers who had other obligations and duties at home. Also, their supply line had become tenuous once they abandoned the safety of the hills. Moreover, the leaders must have been concerned that the alliance of the last remaining defenders of Greek freedom might succumb to interstate rivalries or the lure of Persian gold. For the Persians, the need for an immediate confrontation was even greater. They could not let another year go by without a decision, especially since the Greek fleet had cut their supply line at sea.¹⁶² Also, how long could they rely on the ability of their Greek ally, Thebes, to feed such a large army?¹⁶³ Finally, there was a more

immediate concern in the mind of Mardonius. He saw the Greek army increasing in number with the passing of the days and knew that other levies might join Pausanias's men as well.¹⁶⁴

The fifth stage commenced on the night of the eighth day, with the Persian decision that the time had arrived for action. A body of Persian horsemen was sent to cut the supply line of the Greeks at the pass over Mount Cithaeron. There, they caught 500 beasts of burden and slaughtered them together with their handlers.¹⁶⁵

Two more days passed without further action. On the eleventh day, Mardonius called a war council, which decided on a general attack the next day. But on the twelfth, according to Herodotus, the Greeks, informed about the Persian plan, tried a number of maneuvers to change their line. The Spartans at the right wing moved to the left, while the Athenians went to the right. The intent was to post the Athenians against the Persians since they had had experience against them at Marathon. Mardonius responded by moving his left wing to the right. When this happened, the Spartans and Athenians again exchanged places, which was followed by a countermove by Mardonius, who wanted his best troops, the Persians, to fight the Greeks' best troops, the Spartans.¹⁶⁶ We do not have to accept Herodotus's account here. It seems unlikely that the Greeks could carry out those cumbersome maneuvers in the face of a more numerous and more mobile enemy, even with the Asopos River between them. However, we do not necessarily need to discard all of Herodotus's story. Pausanias might have intended to carry out the maneuvers initially and then rejected them when he saw a countermove or possibly a threatening gesture on the part of Mardonius. However, this still does not explain why Mardonius did not attack once he had decided to do so and once he had recognized the disarray or at least the indecision in the Greek camp. The likely explanation is that he wanted to place the Greeks at an even greater disadvantage before the final confrontation. The Greeks' food supply had been cut, and Mardonius now tried to do the same with their water supply. He poisoned the Gargaphian spring near the Spartans' encampment,¹⁶⁷ and at the same time, he barred the rest of the Greek army from the waters of the Asopos River by "reason of the [Persian] horsemen and the arrows."¹⁶⁸

All this put the Greeks in a quandary. On the night of the twelfth, Pausanias held a council of war. The council decided to withdraw the army to safer grounds that very night, in the dark, for fear that at daylight, "the horsemen [might] press after them and disorder their array."¹⁶⁹

A number of questionable details in this regard are found in Herodotus's account. He suggests that the Greek center, made up of Corinthians, Megarians, and Phliasians, abandoned the Athenians on the left wing and the Spartans and the Tegeans on the right to face the enemy alone. They withdrew in panic, he says, at double the distance that they had agreed

upon during the council of war—20 stades (3.6 kilometers) instead of 10 stades (1.8 kilometers).¹⁷⁰ It is debatable, however, that the center's withdrawal was due to cowardice. A more likely explanation is that it lost its way as it retreated in the dark. Again, fear was probably not the reason why it participated only in the concluding stage of the battle on the next day. More likely, it was because the corresponding center of the enemy decided to run away from the battlefield instead of coming to blows with the Greeks once the troops realized that the Persian left, Mardonius's wing, had been vanquished.¹⁷¹

The Spartans and the Athenians did not start their withdrawal until dawn—the Spartans because they were unable to convince one of their leaders to retreat and the Athenians because they were waiting for the Spartans to initiate the move.¹⁷² Whatever the reason, the truth is that the Greek army seems to have been in a state of disarray just at the eve of the battle. It was at this point that the sixth stage began.

Mardonius misunderstood the intention of the Greek army. He thought that they were in flight, and so he, in a rush, commanded the Persian left to advance, soon followed by the Medizing Greeks (Figure 3.4).¹⁷³ Each of Mardonius's units moved at top speed, "no battalion having order in its ranks nor place assigned to the line."¹⁷⁴ It was a serious mistake. He caught up with what he regarded as his main prey—the Spartans and the Tegeans of the Greeks' right wing, and his cavalry was able to pin them down and wait for his infantry to arrive to finish off the Greeks. But the disordered pursuit and piecemeal arrival of the Persian units must have lessened the impact of the initial blow against an army in retreat and probably in disarray. Nonetheless, the initial shock that the Greek right wing experienced must still have been formidable. Although it seems that they were already moving on terrain not fully suited to cavalry charges, the condition of the Spartans was critical. According to Herodotus, they sent a messenger to the left wing asking the Athenians for help, but the Athenians too were being attacked and could spare no men, especially not the archers whom the Spartans had particularly requested.¹⁷⁵

Thus, the Spartans and Tegeans stood alone—hoplites and light infantrymen and servants.¹⁷⁶ When the Persian infantry arrived and relieved the cavalry, they set their large shields, a form of *pavise* (a large oblong shield), on the ground and unleashed their arrows at the Greeks. At the beginning, the Greeks, having no missile troops, did not answer in the only way they could—with a fight at close quarter. The reason was, according to Herodotus, that the auspices were unfavorable. G. De Sanctis thinks instead that Pausanias delayed his attack because he first wanted to make sure that his line was safe from any outflanking action.¹⁷⁷ I would add, however, that since the Greeks had been caught while on the move, they, like the pursuing Persians, must have been in a state of disarray and thus in

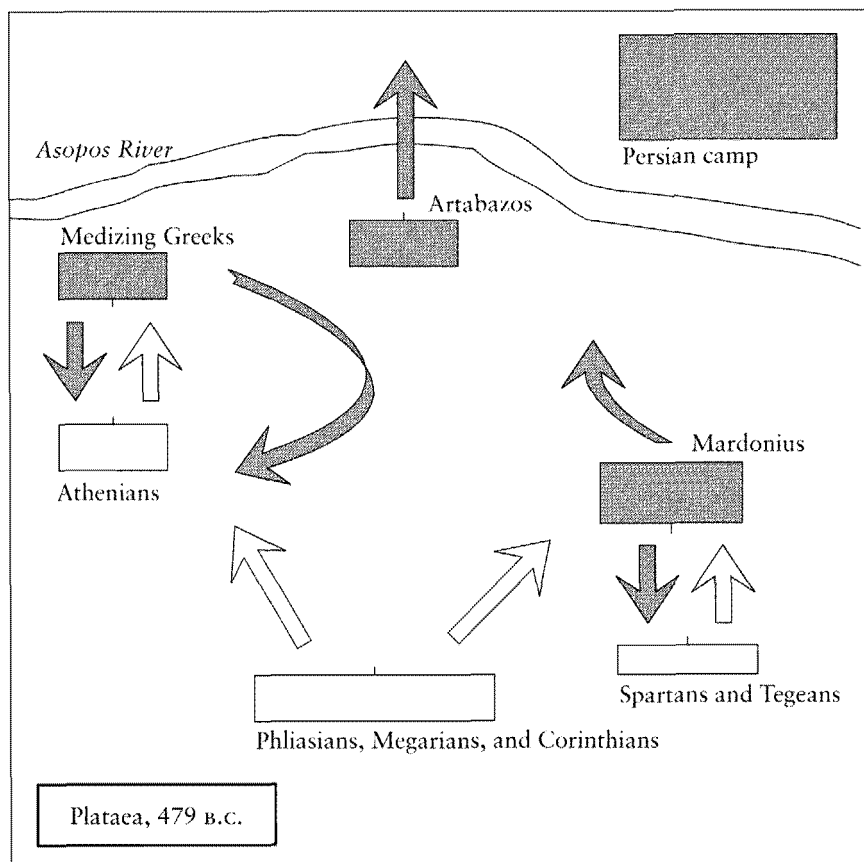


FIGURE 3.4

need of time to reorganize their ranks. Finally, although the idea of delaying attack in such a crucial moment because of unfavorable auspices seems irrational to modern people, we should not discount the religious explanation completely. The Greeks were not necessarily afraid of manipulating the auspices, as, for instance, Pausanias seemed to have done in the end when he almost ordered the deities to come to his support through favorable signs.¹⁷⁸ But on the whole, auspices were taken very seriously.

The Tegeans, regardless of what the auspices were saying, could no longer stand still. They surged forward and attacked the Persians and were soon followed by the Spartans, who, after Pausanias's plea and the Tegeans' action, had finally received favorable auspices. At close quarters, the issue could only end in favor of armored men fighting in close ranks against unarmored soldiers who were probably arrayed more loosely. But the Persians

did not refuse the fight. They threw away their bows, likely fighting with spears and swords instead, and met the Greeks with courage. Actually, as long as Mardonius was alive, surrounded by a guard of 1,000 men, the outcome remained in doubt. But when he was killed and his guard was destroyed, the Persians gave way and withdrew in flight.¹⁷⁹

The role of the Persian cavalry at this stage is hard to assess. We must assume that once it had accomplished its role in pinning the retreating Greeks, it must have withdrawn, either because cavalry could not do much else on broken terrain or because it was enormously difficult in those times to coordinate the operations of different types of arms. What role the cavalry played later, when Mardonius's soldiers were routed, is unclear. Did the Persians, like the Thebans, screen their fleeing infantry?¹⁸⁰

The sixth stage of the battle could be described as a triptych. The most important panel was on the right, featuring the confrontation of the Spartans and Tegeans against Mardonius and his Persians, but the other two panels of the triptych also depicted action. The Greek troops of the center were not engaged at all. Artabazos, commander of the Persians opposite them, once he realized that the left wing had been defeated, withdrew in the direction of Phocis on his way to the bridge across the Hellespont.¹⁸¹ It was then that the Greek center divided itself into two columns, the Corinthians moving through foothills toward the Spartans on the right wing and the Megarians and Phliasians heading across the plain toward the Athenians on the left.¹⁸²

The Athenians meanwhile were caught in the open, but they fought well and defeated the Medizing Greeks, who withdrew in good order, screened by their cavalry.¹⁸³ Actually, while in retreat, the Theban horsemen found easy prey in the advancing Megarians and Phliasians, killing 600 of them.¹⁸⁴

The seventh and final stage of the battle was a mopping up operation. The Spartans and then the Athenians attacked the Persian camp and slaughtered the soldiers who had sought refuge there, but they were less successful against the Medizing Greeks, who escaped.

According to Herodotus, the casualties among the Greeks were fairly low, except for the 600 Megarians and Phliasians of the center.¹⁸⁵ For the rest, the Spartans suffered 91 casualties, the Tegeans 17, and the Athenians 52.¹⁸⁶ But Plutarch puts Greek casualties at a higher figure—1,360.¹⁸⁷ Herodotus claims that, except for Artabazos's 40,000 men, only a scarce 3,000 were left of the Persian army that began with 300,000.¹⁸⁸ No doubt, Herodotus inflates his assessment enormously. If we assume that the Medizing Greeks numbered about 20,000 and that they suffered only 300 casualties,¹⁸⁹ that they were able to escape because their cavalry protected their retreat,¹⁹⁰ and that Artabazos's men withdrew to the safety of Phocis, this would mean the casualties must have come mainly from the left—40,000 men if we assume that the Persians' left was identical to their center in terms of numerical strength. We do not know, however, how many camp

followers and servants were caught in the fight and in the camp assault or how many of them were slain. Still, even the highest figure possible would be much lower than the number Herodotus suggests.

The Great Persian Wars had come to a close on the soil of Greece, although they would continue for a time on the shores of Asia Minor. Men "famed for their spear"¹⁹¹ had once again defeated "archers and horsemen/fearful to behold, dreadful in battle."¹⁹² It is easy to dismiss the vanquished as inept and their system of combat as weak. In reality, the Persian war machine was still formidable, and in the right conditions and under appropriate leadership, it could still be dangerous. After all, this was the army that had conquered most of eastern Asia, that would hold a large empire for another century and a half, and that had come very close to subduing even the stubborn men of Hellas.

The Persians had lost the battle for two primary reasons. In the last analysis, their cavalry, which had functioned so well until it had pinned the retreating Greek right wing, seems to have played no relevant role afterward. Even more important, however, was the Persians' inability to combine the actions of their three divisions. In the mistaken belief that the Greeks were fleeing, the whole battle had been fought on the spur of the moment. The left wing had come to grips with their opponents, the Spartans and Tegeans, but (at least at the beginning) only in a piecemeal fashion that must have decreased the possibility of victory. The Persian center had never been engaged and had fled before any blow was struck. Their right wing had done a little better, and probably the Thebans had fought valiantly, but taking into consideration that the right wing was composed of Medizing Greeks, the lackluster performance should have been expected. Once again, the Persians had been defeated tactically by their prime enemy, the heavy infantrymen. In a battle that depended on frontal attack, hoplites were clearly better soldiers.

The Persian Army

Unlike the Greek host, which was united by common language, ethnic origin, and sometimes tradition, the Persian army was a polyglot and cosmopolitan force. The core was composed of Persians and Medes, identities that Greek authors used interchangeably. In reality, Medes and Persians were different people. Both groups had originally been cattle herders who had moved into Iran from central Asia. Their language as well as their costumes were similar (Indo-European in origin), but once in Iran, the Medes had settled in the area of the Zagros mountains and the Persians in Fars, near the kingdom of Elam. Eventually, the Persians conquered the Medes, who were regarded as one of the two core populations of their empire.¹⁹³ Apart from the Medes and Persians, the rest of Xerxes' army included mer-

cenaries and subject people.¹⁹⁴ An inscription on the south retaining wall of Darius's palace at Persepolis lists twenty-three subject people.¹⁹⁵ The ethnic variety was matched by variety in weapons and types of soldiers: bowmen, javelinmen, slingers, spearmen, horsemen, charioteers, even people fighting with lassoes. Yet bowmen and horsemen took first place: References in the literature speak of "an Ares who fights with the bow,"¹⁹⁶ "the furious cavalry charge" against which cities fall,¹⁹⁷ "all the horse-driving mass of men/and the tramping troops of men on foot,/like a swarm of bees have gone away/streaming after the lord of troops,/have crossed the bridge that yokes/both necks of land/one to another."¹⁹⁸ The spear, too, was well represented. Some of the units of bowmen, for instance, the Persians, Medes, and a host of other nationalities, combined the bow with the spear, although it seems that in all cases (with the probable exception of some recruits from Asia Minor), their spears were shorter than those that the Greeks used.¹⁹⁹

Some units of Xerxes' army wore armor. The Persians had "sleeved tunics of divers colours, with scales iron like in appearance to the scales of fish."²⁰⁰ The Assyrians seemed to have worn bronze helmets and linen breastplates.²⁰¹ The Persian commanders certainly must have worn armor as well. When Masistius, the leader of the cavalry, fell to the ground in the fight at the foothills of Mount Cithaeron, he initially escaped injury from the stabbing Greeks because he wore "a purple tunic over a cuirass of golden scales."²⁰² Yet most of them were either lightly armored or not armored at all. Herodotus's words imply only a certain amount of armor was worn even by the Persians and Medes mentioned earlier, not the complex cuirass, whether bronze or linen, of the Greeks. They also did not wear helmets but instead "loose caps called tiaras."²⁰³ There is, finally, no doubt that most of the other ethnic groups used either an elementary form of protection or nothing at all.

The problem of lack of protection for bodies and heads was compounded by the use of inadequate shields or a total lack of them. Here too there are some exceptions, such as the Ionian Greeks, who must have worn the hoplite armor, and the Assyrians, who used large shields in the Egyptian fashion.²⁰⁴ This means that if the Assyrian shields were similar to those used in the later stages of the Egyptian Empire, they were cumbersome but certainly large and an excellent form of protection. On the whole, most of the shields were made of wicker, such as those of the Persians and Medes,²⁰⁵ although some units certainly carried or had servants carry for them larger shields as well: Their small shields would have been inadequate to set up the shield wall from behind which they shot their arrows.²⁰⁶ Of the various infantry types that followed Xerxes into Greece, only 15 out of the 46 ethnic groups mentioned in Herodotus carried shields.²⁰⁷

The relative presence or absence of armor plus shields or the lack thereof meant that the Persian army sacrificed staying power to mobility. This as-

essment is validated by the fact that the cavalry constituted a large part of the army. In the campaign that led to Marathon, Hammond estimates that there probably were 1,000 horsemen out of about 25,000 fighting troops.²⁰⁸ A recent work suggests there were 30,000 horsemen against 60,000 infantry at Plataea.²⁰⁹ Hignett thinks that the ratio between infantry and cavalry was about 7 to 1.²¹⁰

That the Persian army was made up of professionals is without doubt if the term refers to men who chose a military career as their main activity in life. Yet whether this professional status made them better than the Greeks on the battlefield is debatable. The Persians were superior in the sense that they could carry war outside their borders for a long time while the Greeks could not because they had other obligations in private and public life. In other words, the Persians could build empires, but the Greeks could not on a similarly large scale—or at least they were unable to do so before a new governmental system became acceptable under the Macedonians. Yet this did not make the Persians more formidable than the Greeks once on the battlefield, as, for instance, Delbrück has maintained.²¹¹ The system of hoplite fighting was rather elementary—each man was to keep the ranks, protect himself and the person at his side, anchor the line's flanks, and move forward. In the right conditions and if the enemy had no other alternative but to meet them face to face, Greek hoplites would inevitably defeat their lighter opponent. This was the case at Marathon, at Plataea, and even at Thermopylae as long as the Immortals did not outflank Leonidas's men.

The various units of the Persian army seem to have been based on the decimal system, starting from a minimum unit of 10 soldiers and moving to 100, 1,000, and 10,000.²¹² Moreover, as was customary in the ancient world, the various people in the Persian army were grouped according to their ethnic backgrounds. For instance, Medes and Cissians launched the initial attack at Thermopylae.²¹³ The situation at Plataea also gives the impression that the Persians tended to divide their various ethnic groups into different divisions. Thus, the Medizing Greeks were grouped on the right, the Persians and Medes on the left, and the rest of the ethnic groups in the center.²¹⁴ Their generals, however, like their fleet commanders, tended to be Persians, and their chief marshals were mostly relatives of the royal house, as was customary in the ancient Near East.²¹⁵

The Persian method of attack followed four stages under ideal battlefield conditions. It began with the operations of the cavalry, continued with the foot bowmen coming into action, and concluded with close combat either by bowmen switching to the spear or by proper close-fighting units. If the enemy was routed, there would be a fourth stage, during which the cavalry would become predominant in pursuit.

The Persians brought the cavalry to the highest form of sophistication after its fledgling start under the Assyrians. Only Alexander's Macedonians would be able to go beyond the fine arrangement that Persians and Medes

were able to achieve. The Persians used their cavalry in a number of ways—to cut enemy supply lines, to pursue a fleeing army, to harass its lines, to engage opponents in hand-to-hand combat, to destroy them by fighting from a distance, and to cover any retreat of their troops. The Great Wars give little evidence, except for the raid against the supply train,²¹⁶ for an ability to move large contingents of soldiers quickly and nothing at all on the cavalry's skill in turning the flank of an outnumbered and horseless enemy. In the first case, however, both the rocky terrain and the size of the Persian army might have limited the quickness of their operations during the Great Wars. In the second case, if we examine the three encounters of the conflict, the cavalry was probably absent at Marathon, it could not be used at Thermopylae, and it seems that at Plataea, the way in which the Greeks anchored their line prevented any serious outflanking maneuvers by a sizable number of horsemen. The battle of Plataea, however, provided classic examples of the cavalry's other functions. Besides cutting the flow of food provisions, they also prevented the Greeks from gaining access to the water supply, both by poisoning "the Gargaphian spring, whence all the army of the Greeks drew its water" and by preventing their opponents from drawing water from the Asopos River.²¹⁷ Another action in which the Persian cavalry was often engaged was general harassment of the enemy lines before the main stage of the battle took place, a method designed to disorder the enemy physically and disrupt its emotional stability. Clearly, they were very successful in doing so during the stages of the campaign of Plataea: The Persian horse continually beset and troubled the Greeks;²¹⁸ they disordered them;²¹⁹ and they caused them "unending hardship."²²⁰

Cutting supply lines, poisoning water sources, preventing enemy access to the water, or harassing the soldiers deployed for battle to jeopardize their physical and emotional integrity—all these tactics were employed before the principal engagement took place. The cavalry was even more important in the first stage of a pitched battle, which horsemen, in combination with foot archers, carried out if the enemy had few or no missile units. When they vastly outnumbered their opponents, as was the case with a Phocian contingent in the early stages of the campaign of Plataea,²²¹ the horsemen encircled and kept shooting at their enemy, moving away when the opponents tried to close with them. If their prey was of a sizable number, as the Megarians and the Athenians were (with about 11,000 men in all), then they rode in order by squadrons, each releasing its missiles, wheeling away, and letting another squadron move forward.²²² It was a method perfectly suited against footmen encumbered by heavy armor, who were very dangerous in close combat but unable to close on a nimble enemy: The Persians, says Herodotus, "were mounted archers and ill to close with."²²³

The actions of the horsemen in the initial stages of the battle were designed to accomplish a number of things. The cavalry troops could destroy their opponents if they outnumbered them, as seems to have been the case

in their attack against the Megarians before the Athenians intervened or in their mock battle with the Phocians. More often, however, they tried to achieve other aims—to disorganize their foes, to force the infantry to assume a static position, or to pin the enemy down until the arrival of the rest of the force. This technique was used at Plataea. For instance, Pausanias decided to move his army at night because he was afraid that “the horsemen [would] press after them and disorder their array.”²²⁴ When the Spartans began their retreat on the dawn of the thirteenth day, it was the Persian cavalry that launched the pursuit and pinned the enemy before the arrival of the bowmen and the rest of the Persian left wing.²²⁵ Once the Persian horsemen came into contact with the Phocians, the Greeks seem to have had no alternative but to stay still, “drawing their ranks to the best of their power.”²²⁶ Although our main source, Herodotus, is not clear on this, it seems that the Spartans and Tegeans were also compelled to assume a static position when under attack from cavalry and that they moved offensively only when the horsemen withdrew to allow the bowmen in for what they thought would be the final defeat of the Greeks.²²⁷

Although riding to the enemy, shooting, and then riding back seem to have been the favorite maneuvers of the cavalry on the battlefield, Persian horsemen were also, if necessary, able to engage the enemy in close combat by charging them with their swords or with their javelins used as spears. For example, when they realized that their commander, Masistius, had been killed, the Persian horsemen rode all together and engaged the Megarians and Athenians in hand-to-hand combat.²²⁸

Once the enemy had been pinned down and its array disordered by the horsemen, bowmen came into play, and the second stage of the battle began. The Persian infantry would move forward, “set up their shields for a fence,” and then shoot “showers of arrows innumerable” from the safety of the barricade.²²⁹ This apparently was a common technique. At Mycale too, also fought in 479 B.C. but on the shores of Asia Minor, the Persian infantry made its preparation for battle by implanting the shields “close to make a barricade.”²³⁰

The shields, which must have been fairly large (like the pavises that protected the medieval crossbowmen), were not just a barrier to ensure the protection of the bowmen from the threat of missiles. At Plataea, they were set against the Spartans and the Tegeans who apparently had no missile units, which implies that they were also a form of protection for hand-to-hand combat. When Spartans and Tegeans rushed the Persians at Plataea, the bowmen fought valiantly for the fence of shields,²³¹ which probably means that they fought from behind the shield wall. That shields were used in this way was even clearer at Mycale: “While the Persians’ shields stood upright, they defended themselves and held their own in battle.” Actually, they stood their ground for “a long time” even after the Greeks were able to break the shield barrier.²³²

How the shield wall was set up is uncertain. It does not seem, however, that the Persian bow units included shield-holders, as the Assyrians did. Actually, as events of the battle of Plataea suggest ("the Persians met them [the Spartans rushing their shield wall] by throwing away their bows"²³³), the bowmen, who were also armed with spears, were apparently the only ones fighting from the safety of the shields and ready to switch their role from bowmen to spearmen.

The third stage of the battle, if necessary, involved hand-to-hand combat. As the Great Wars show, it was here that the Persians were at their weakest. But by that point, under normal circumstances, the enemy, having endured a long missile onslaught, would have been disordered and ready to break and run. The Persians engaged in hand-to-hand melee in various circumstances—when their arrows had been used up; when the time had come to finish off their opponents and the man-on-man fighting could be used in combination with missiles, such as during the last stand of the Greeks at Thermopylae;²³⁴ or when no other alternative seemed possible, as at the beginning of the battle of Thermopylae. In a case like Thermopylae, where the cavalry could not be used and archers were probably ineffective,²³⁵ the Persians were also prepared to engage in hand-to-hand combat from the very beginning.

The cavalry, absent from the second and third stages of the battle, must have reappeared when the enemy broke and ran. This would have been the fourth and final stage of a successful encounter. Events at Thermopylae, Marathon, and Plataea give little direct evidence on the action of the Persian cavalry in case of victory; at Thermopylae, the defeated Greeks did not flee, and at Marathon and Plataea, the Greeks triumphed. Yet some conclusions can be drawn by implication from the facts available. It is clear, for instance, that one of Pausanias's main concerns, once he had decided to withdraw, was the presence of the Persian cavalry. He decided to move at night for fear that those horsemen would pursue his troops and cause havoc.²³⁶ Once they were on the move, the Spartans and the Tegeans clung "to broken ground and the lower slopes of Cithaeron, to escape from the Persian horse."²³⁷ Moreover, one of the reasons why Leonidas did not retreat at Thermopylae was without doubt because he knew his army could have been easy prey for the Persian horsemen.

The Persian method of attack seems flawless,²³⁸ and their choices of function for the various units appear impeccable, at least for the horsemen. Less satisfactory was their combination of the bow and spear for the same individuals. And even more serious was their inability to coordinate the action of their cavalry with that of the infantry.²³⁹ It is quite clear that this was one of the reasons for their failure at Plataea against the Spartans and the Tegeans.

The Persian infantry apparently caused little worry to the Greeks. Even the Persian spearmen, such as the Medes, the Cissians, and the Immortals,

seem not to have been a serious threat to the Greek hoplite.²⁴⁰ The foot archers made the hoplites more vulnerable because they could engage them from a relatively long range, but their role too must have been more a matter of provoking psychological disarray than posing a real threat of physical danger.²⁴¹ However, there is no doubt that the Greeks feared the action of the cavalry.²⁴² They had good reason for this. It was the Persian horsemen who almost wiped out the Megarians, who cut the Greeks' flow of provisions, who choked their spring, and who prevented them from getting water from the Asopos River. It was both to find another source of water and to escape the harassment of the cavalry that Pausanias decided to move. It was the cavalry that pinned the retreating Spartans and Tegeans in battle. And it was in deference to the power and threat of the Persian horsemen that Pausanias decided in the first instance to move his army during the night.

Why the Persians Lost

The Greeks would claim that their victory in both wars reflected the superior features of their civilization: the way they fought; the system of government that they defended; the inspiring example provided by Sparta and especially by Athens; the type of people that the East produced; and, in contrast, the leadership of a few outstanding Greeks such as Miltiades at Marathon, Themistocles at Salamis, and Pausanias at Plataea. There may be a kernel of truth in such assertions. Certainly, as I attempted to express earlier, Greek hoplites were almost unbeatable in face-to-face confrontation when their flanks could not be turned. Fighting for their home, often on territories belonging to their polis, must have given an added impetus to their efforts.²⁴³ Yet the Persians could still have won. Marathon could have ended in disaster for the Greeks if the Persian wings had lasted a little longer against the Greek right and left. A little more time would have allowed the Persian center to dispatch their enemy counterpart. Then it could have relieved the pressure on the wings by attacking the Greek right and left from the rear. Similarly, the outcome at Plataea was in doubt for a long time. Only Mardonius's death and Artabazos's behavior turned the tables in the Greek army's favor. The Persians may have been able to salvage even the defeat at Salamis if they had been more willing to gamble. After all, at Salamis, the Greeks were expecting another attack, which suggests that their victory did not seem at the time as overwhelming as it would a few days later. Moreover, one-third of the Persian fleet, composed of the Egyptians, was fresh, having taken no part in the clash. But Xerxes combined the setback at sea with a crucial mistake of his own: He executed some of his Phoenician captains, his best seamen, for cowardice.²⁴⁴ If there was, in fact, anyone to blame, it would have been more accurate to point the finger at himself for falling into Themistocles' trap.

At first sight, the initial plans of both Darius and Xerxes seemed excellent. But in the father's case, the original idea of attacking from the north had failed mainly because of the caprices of the weather, which had brought havoc to his fleet while it was rounding the Akte peninsula near Mount Athos. The next expedition, the attack across the Aegean, was a mistake—too few men and a fragile supply line. Xerxes' initial plans could not be blamed. He secured peace in his empire; he went back to the original plan of attacking from the north; and he established the safety of his soldiers in a number of ways. He built a bridge across the Hellespont, cut a canal across the Akte peninsula, made his army and navy mutually supportive by advancing in a parallel manner, established supply depots in Hellas, and focused his attack on Athens and Sparta in hopes that the other cities would accept his rule. Yet a good initial idea was in the end carried out poorly because of ideological factors, flaws in the original plan, and mistakes in the field.

Strauss and Ober have stressed that three ideological factors were central to Xerxes' expedition: "family, military prowess, and Truth worship."²⁴⁵ Xerxes, like his father, Darius, before him, had no blood claim to the throne that Cyrus had established by 550 B.C. It is true that his claim to the throne was stronger than his father's (his mother, Atossa, was Cyrus's daughter), yet Xerxes too felt that he could legitimize his rule only if he emulated the high standard set by Cyrus on the battlefield. In other words, victory and conquest were an essential part of his suitability for the throne. Moreover, Xerxes' view of life was conditioned by his religious beliefs in Zarathustrian principles. Zarathustra saw life as a struggle between the good realm of Truth/Life and the evil realm of Lie/Darkness. The burden of both political and ideological factors meant that Xerxes had to punish Hellas, the challenger of his royal house's dominance on the battlefield and the embodiment of Lie/Darkness. In Greece, his father had experienced bitter defeat, and as a consequence, revolt had followed in the imperial lands. Soon after Marathon, Egypt and Judah had risen in rebellion in 486, and later, in 482, even Babylonia had tried to shake Persian control.²⁴⁶ Xerxes had to subjugate the Greeks and complete what his father had begun. Moreover, Hellas, especially Athens, was the perfect symbol of Lie/Darkness since it had broken a sacred commitment. Just before the Ionian revolt of 499 B.C., Athens had sent the token of its subjection, earth and water, to the Great King. But soon after, when the Ionians seemed to be victorious in their early stages of the revolt against the Persians, Athens had reneged on its pledge. The Athenians had even sacked the Persian city of Sardis. Thus, they were perceived as liars and the embodiment of evil. They had to be punished.²⁴⁷

Ideological factors, then, had a great influence on Xerxes' actions. And he compounded a lack of flexibility with a number of mistakes. Darius had brought too few men to Greece; Xerxes brought too many. There were 46

ethnic units in his army, most with different armor and arms and different languages. The command structure of the Persian army must have been a nightmare, with 6 generals, 30 general officers, and countless subordinate officers. All this must have caused serious difficulties in communication and a lack of consistency at the tactical level.²⁴⁸ It probably would have been better to deploy a smaller army, including only the best troops. Such an army at Plataea, for instance, almost turned the tables in the Persians' favor. A bigger army than Darius's expedition was clearly a necessity, but a vast army created all kinds of problems. The Persians started to experience logistical difficulties right after moving from Thrace toward Thermopylae.²⁴⁹ It is likely that the land supply route was not adequate for such a large body of soldiers, not only because of its slowness but also because so many men would have soon depleted the land's food and water resources. Xerxes' decision at Salamis has to be seen as more than a naive reaction to Themistocles' trick. It was also the natural response of a man who had to justify his throne by a splendid victory and who had to punish the evildoers (the representatives of Lie against Truth), and it was the reaction of a man pressured by serious logistical problems. The Great King's reaction after the defeat confirms this. Although timidity probably played a part in his decision not to make another attempt at defeating the Greek fleet, the need for a secure supply line must have been on his mind when he ordered his fleet to Asia Minor and then retreated toward the Hellespont, likely with a large part of the land army. A smaller army under Mardonius and Artabazos made sense in terms of supply and probably in terms of efficiency. That he lost at Plataea too was not only due to the Greeks' stubborn resistance; it was also due to Mardonius's tactical mistakes in his piecemeal attack against the Spartans and the Tegeans and to Artabazos's ambiguous if not treacherous behavior. The Persians compounded error after error. On the eve of Salamis, why did Xerxes not send a few ships and a few men to land near Argos? The action could have convinced the city to rise against the Spartans, and then the Greek forces at the isthmus would have found themselves with the Argives in the rear and the Persian land army in the front—the right scenario for defeat. As Thucydides argued long ago, the Persians' defeat resulted from an accumulation of their own errors.²⁵⁰

The Symbols of the Victorious

Dramatic as the accounts of the Persian invasions are and fascinating as the interplay of various weapons and systems of combat makes them, the greatest heritage of the Great Wars was probably in the field of symbolic imagery. It set the trend for the future. Europe and Asia, the West and the East, are pictured in terms of an "eternal war." The contrast is not geographical but mainly ideological and spiritual. Later writers would expand

this idea both for the past and for the centuries following the Great Wars. The Trojan conflict became one of the mandatory common themes of the opposition. Later, it would be part of the Roman heritage, which would depict Hannibal's Carthaginians or Cleopatra and Mark Anthony's Egyptians as Eastern symbols. Actium, the battle in which Augustus defeated his enemies in 31 B.C., would be seen as another instance of this "eternal war." How the Romans became part of this process is fascinating in itself. What they did was in the interest of both parties, giving the Romans an identity with the civilized world of the Greek past and giving the Greeks the opportunity to claim that the Romans descended from them.²⁵¹

The process was not a new one. The large Egyptian murals, their sculptures, and their literature are strong evidence that wars had been used in symbolical terms for a long time. The Assyrians too had followed the Egyptian lead with their constructions, visual examples, and their writings. But all the pre-Persian Wars propaganda had been used mainly to emphasize the power of the ruler. The Greeks refined this concept to elevate not individuals but groups of people and not only people but also abstract concepts.

The leitmotiv of Herodotus's narrative, of Aeschylus's *Persae*, and of the works of writers who followed them (even if, like Diodorus Siculus, they also drew from other traditions) was the contrast between Greeks and Persians. The Greeks fought in units in which a man sacrificed his individuality for the security of the whole; the Persians attacked in waves of small units without thinking about the security of the rest of their army. The Greeks were spearmen; the Persians were bowmen who, even when they fought with spears, used shorter weapons than the Greeks. The Greeks were armored and carried large shields; the Persians for the most part were unarmored and had only small shields. The Greeks were few in number but "skilled" against "myriads" of "unskilled" Persians. The Greeks were steady but relatively immobile, while their adversaries were mobile but lacking in courage. Leonidas and his men were collected and methodical in their last fight, even when they knew that the Immortals would be attacking them from the rear at any moment. The captains of the Persians instead had to whip their own soldiers with lashes to prevent them from running away from the battlefield.²⁵² The Greeks preferred to fight at close quarters, as at Marathon and Thermopylae; the Persians tried to wear down their prey from a distance, as in some stages of the campaign and battle of Plataea. The Greeks were free, pious, and civilized; the Persians were unfree, impious, and barbarian. Their *hubris* (a hostile act harming a person's or group's honor²⁵³) brought the punishment of the gods upon them.²⁵⁴ The Greeks were exhorted at Salamis to "bring freedom" to their fatherland,²⁵⁵ and a Spartan leader by the name of Amompharetus would defy the order for withdrawal at Plataea without fear of reprisal;²⁵⁶ the Persian soldiers had to be forced to keep attacking the Spartans at Thermopylae.²⁵⁷

Pausanias did not dare to charge without first consulting and receiving favorable signs from the gods;²⁵⁸ the Persians committed one sacrilege after another: They whipped the waters of the Hellespont when a storm destroyed their first bridge,²⁵⁹ they defiled Leonidas's body at Thermopylae,²⁶⁰ they paid no heed to the sacrifices during the last stage of the battle of Plataea,²⁶¹ and they burned the Temple of Demeter at Eleusis.²⁶² But then, no other behavior could be expected from people who looked, dressed, and behaved differently from the Greeks.²⁶³ They were people who, inordinately rich, had elected gold as their main value against the old Greek value of *penia*, or honest scarcity.²⁶⁴ They were people who used their wealth for personal luxury. The Athenians, when they received the silver from their Laurium mines, used it for the good of the commonwealth—to build a strong navy.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Persians were naturally disposed to accept the rule of a despot, not men who organized their lives around the structure of the polis. In sum, they were barbarians.²⁶⁶ If the Persians had accepted the rule of law like the Athenians or the Spartans had instead of the despotic power of a ruler (who himself was in the hands of evil eunuchs and preying women²⁶⁷), they would not have been defeated or more likely they would not have dared to invade the land of people who were slaves to no one.²⁶⁸ The Greeks were men, the Persians were effeminate. An *oinochoe* (vase) probably commemorating a Greek victory over the Persians portrays a Greek, erect penis in his hand, ready to penetrate a Persian bent over and offering his buttocks.²⁶⁹ As Edith Hall has recently argued, the ancient Greeks—Aeschylus especially but also Hippocrates and others—often represented the Europe-Asia dichotomy as a gender opposition. Asia was the land of effeminate males and was described in their works as “fertile, maternal, seductive, raped, possessed sexually, alone, *unmanned*.” It was “defeated, tamed, bludgeoned, disarmed, and unmanned by the men of Athens and the rest of Hellas”—those men who respected “equality before the law, freedom, self-restraint, and courage.”²⁷⁰

When the two sides met at Salamis, the Greeks moved to the engagement by singing their holy paean and then shouting their famous cry for freedom; the Persians answered with their barbarian “noise.” The Greek ships surrounded the enemy in unison; the Persian ships did not help each other. The Greeks attacked; the Persians fled. No individual Greek was mentioned by name for they were defined as a collectivity and members of the polis; many Persians were mentioned by name. And they were selfish individuals having no sense of the commonwealth.²⁷¹

This did not mean that some Greek writers, especially Herodotus, underplayed the courage or even some of the virtues of the adversary. Actually, Greek presentation of the relationship between Hellenes and Persians was normally based on feelings of both attraction and revulsion.²⁷² For instance, we are told that at Thermopylae, “many of the Medes fell, but oth-

ers attacked in turn; and though they suffered grievous defeat yet they were not driven off."²⁷³ At Plataea, even when the fence of shields came down, "the battle waxed fierce and long."²⁷⁴ Yet Aeschylus, Herodotus, and Diodorus also couched the opposition between Greeks and Persians in terms of the familiar against the unfamiliar, with all the implications that this dichotomy suggests. The familiar was correct, friendly, selfless, rewarding; the unfamiliar was wrong, hostile, sometimes revolting, and always threatening. It was a concept that became one of the mainstays in the description of military opponents from then on, and it still finds clear application in the modern period on both sides of the fence—whether the English and Germans in World War I, the Allies and Germans in World War II, the Americans and North Vietnamese, or the Israelis and Palestinians.²⁷⁵

The opposition between Greeks and Persians would eventually be expressed in two distinct themes, one based on physical revulsion, the other on ideological confrontation. Hippocrates would find the Europeans brave and warlike, while seeing the Asiatics as "less warlike" and "feeble"—not only because they were ruled by kings but also and mainly because the uniformity of their climate made them slack—a characteristic that was "food for cowardice."²⁷⁶ Aristotle, by contrast, would look at Persians from the viewpoint of whether war against them was just or not. Although he felt that wars should be waged only to expand peace and justice, he also believed that the only just wars were those waged by Hellenes against non-Hellenes.²⁷⁷ It is an idea that Aeschylus also implies: "O sons of Greeks," the Hellenes are exhorted before battle is waged at Salamis, "bring freedom to your fatherland, bring freedom to/your children, wives, and seats of your ancestral gods,/and your forebears' graves; now the struggle is for all."²⁷⁸

The contrast between Greeks and Persians contains a number of other concepts that eventually would be powerful agents in restating and reinforcing the key values of Greek society.²⁷⁹ These values were clear throughout the presentation of the wars but nowhere better expressed than in the accounts of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis, again because of the ideological supremacy of Athenian culture. That Salamis was given this honor should not be a surprise. The battle came at a dramatic moment in the invasion. The Persians by then controlled north and central Greece and were poised for their advance into the Peloponnese. Athens had been destroyed, and the Athenian citizens had sought refuge elsewhere. And the enemy fleet greatly outnumbered the Greek fleet. The battle would revolve around one of the great leaders of antiquity, Themistocles, who combined cunning with courage instead of having courage alone, like Leonidas.

That Thermopylae should have supplanted Plataea as the most meaningful symbolic land battle of Xerxes' invasion is a surprise. Soon after the war, it seems that the contemporaries regarded Plataea as the most important land achievement of the wars. Indeed, this was the opinion of Pindar

and Aeschylus.²⁸⁰ This opinion, however, must have changed not long after, for the new view was already reflected in Herodotus, who was a young boy of about four at the time of the two battles. The *Histories* clearly accepted the Spartan tradition, which implies that this had become the standard interpretation by then since Herodotus was not really a friend of Sparta. His choice was again no surprise. By then, Thermopylae stood not only for Sparta's glorification but also as the embodiment of the values upon which the ruling classes of each polis founded the legitimacy of their rule.

Yet the choice of Thermopylae is at best questionable from the military viewpoint. It is debatable whether even the Greeks at the time of the battle considered Thermopylae to be crucial to their stand against Xerxes. At that stage, they could not defeat the Persians on land; all they could hope for was to delay the enemy's advance. The choice of the location of their stand was poor: The pass could and eventually would be outflanked. The number of soldiers sent there was too small. The delay of the enemy could have succeeded only if success on land was matched by success at sea. In any case, the delay alone served little purpose. It probably helped to put less pressure on the evacuation of Athens, but certainly it did not prevent the Greek cities in the path of the Persian advance from remaining loyal to the alliance of Athens and the Peloponnesians. The casualties that Leonidas's men inflicted on the Persians, even if we accept Herodotus's figure of 20,000,²⁸¹ were not sufficient to alter the strength of the Persian army radically, despite the fact that they came from the Persians' best units. In other words, there were numerous reasons to regard Thermopylae at worst as a failure, at best as a stopgap in the military pattern of the Great Wars. But in spite of that, the manner in which a relatively small contingent of Greeks was defeated could serve very well as an expression of the most cherished values of the community and even as a means to create new ones. It is this purpose that Thermopylae and also Salamis soon served. In the aftermath of the stand at the pass, the battle started to become the symbol of racial vitality and freedom. Anecdotes, tradition, and popular legend all served to strengthen and convey the symbol, especially in the emphasis on freedom.²⁸²

One of the strong traditions that came out of the Great Wars was the belief that the Greeks fought for freedom, which was understood as the defense of the institutions of their city-states against the rule of a monarch. This feeling was expressed over and over again by the many contestants in the conflict. Simonides of Ceos writes: "The children of the Athenians drove out the Persian host and saved their country from woeful servitude"; "they chose to leave a country green and gay with freedom"; they fought to save the pastures of Tegea so that "their dear Greece might not doff freedom from her renowned head."²⁸³ Yet nowhere was the fight for freedom better symbolized than at Thermopylae: The Spartans, writes Diodorus,

“were more responsible for the common freedom of the Greeks than those who fought at a later time in the battles against Xerxes.”²⁸⁴

The idea of the fight for freedom against subjugation was mixed with a number of other patriotic or communitarian values. The benefit of the particular was elevated to the benefit of the whole community: “At Marathon the Athenians fought for Greece,” writes Simonides of Ceos;²⁸⁵ “with our lives we saved all Greece”;²⁸⁶ Adimantus was a person “through whose counsels Greece put on the crown of freedom”;²⁸⁷ “we strove to crown Greece with freedom”;²⁸⁸ “[the fame of] these men’s courage [shall be imperishable] forever. . . . For they checked, as footsoldiers [and on swift-faring ships], all of Hellas from [witnessing the day] of slavery,” says a fragment on an Athenian marble relief of the Persian Wars.²⁸⁹

When the safety of the whole community was at stake, even rival cities, such as Athens and Sparta, or bitter personal rivals, such as Themistocles and Aristides at Salamis,²⁹⁰ could cooperate with each other. Those who let their particular animosities take precedence over the interests of the community, such as the Medizing Greeks in general and the Thebans in particular, were traitors. This explains, at least in part, why the Thebans are presented in such a poor light at Thermopylae.²⁹¹ After all, their city would join the Persians and fight stubbornly in their support at Plataea.

The true sons of Greece acted differently, not like the Thebans. They were obedient. At Thermopylae, they kept the post that Greece had assigned them: Leonidas deemed it “unseemly for himself and the Spartans to desert that post which they had first come to defend.”²⁹² They were also daring. When their spears broke on the last hillock, they fought with swords and finally with fists and teeth.²⁹³ They were a small band against “the hundred myriads,” they were “not equal in number to even the thousand part of the enemy,”²⁹⁴ and they stood “against the unbelievable multitudes.”²⁹⁵ They caused shock among their enemy: At Thermopylae, Xerxes “thrice sprang up in fear for his army from the throne where he sat to view them.”²⁹⁶ They put honor before dishonor, giving up their own lives “bravely rather than to live shamefully.”²⁹⁷ Of the two Spartans who initially were left behind, Eurystus, who came back half-blind to die with his comrades, was a hero, and Aristodemus, who remained behind, was a coward.²⁹⁸ The warriors of Thermopylae also set an example for future generations. The inscriptions and the monument placed at the site of the battle were reminders for posterity:²⁹⁹

Four thousand warriors, flower of Pelops’ land,
Did here against three hundred myriads stand.

Here fought and fell Megistias, hero brave,
Slain by the Medes, who crossed Spercheius’ wave;

Well knew the seer his doom, but scorned to fly,
And rather chose with Sparta's king to die.

Thermopylae was a stimulus for other Greeks "to perform similar courageous exploits."³⁰⁰ It could not be otherwise, for these men "alone of all of whom history records, have in defeat been accorded greater fame than all others who have won the fairest victories."³⁰¹

This led, in turn, to the belief that not only were the Greek warriors an example for the future but also that their behavior was greater than anything of the past: "In bravery they would surpass all men of former times." Actually, their real contest was not against barbarians; rather, they were "in competition with all whom had ever won admiration for their courage."³⁰²

Forty years after Thermopylae, in 440 B.C., the body of Leonidas was brought back to Sparta. A statue was erected in his honor, and the names of the Spartiate casualties were sculpted on the monument. A yearly festival, the Leonidra, would also be held from then on in honor of the brave Spartan king.³⁰³

There were also other elements in Leonidas's sanctification. Herodotus's account is clear evidence of this. From the beginning, Leonidas is presented more in the manner of a tragic Greek god than in the fashion of a human being. He is the descendant of uncommon blood, for the highest symbol of human strength and bravery, Heracles, was his ancestor.³⁰⁴ His behavior follows a strict moral code: He decides to give up his life because it is the only way to save his state, or, if we accept the other tradition, he remains there because he is obedient to the laws of the Spartan state.³⁰⁵

Go tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,
That here obedient to their words we lie.

His behavior is portrayed as a model in contrast with that of the traitor Demaratus, a former Spartan king now in the service of the invader, or of Ephialtes, the vile Greek who shows the Persians the outflanking path. He is killed fighting, and over his body a fierce struggle ensues in the manner of the Homeric struggle over Patroclus's body in the *Iliad*.³⁰⁶

It did not matter if, in the process, historical fact was distorted and historical fiction came to the fore. What was important was to make Leonidas, a man responsible for an almost stupid strategic and tactical decision, into a hero. It was a celebration of those killed fighting for their own country, an idea that was strikingly new at the time and that would later become a mainstay of the Western patriotic heritage.

Egyptians and Assyrians too had celebrated their battles but with enormous differences. They had glorified their victories, not both their victories and their defeats, as the Greeks did; they had elevated their leaders, not their community; they had emphasized the vision of the enemies trampled

under their feet, not the sanctification of their own dead. But with the Greeks came a new patriotic ethic. Winning, of course, remained important, but even more important, one could say, was the idea that the soldier performed his duty for the fatherland. He had to be glorified and honored to convince him to do this. He had to accept the notion that his blood and his mind did not belong to him as an individual but to the state.

Such a concept is well suited to the ruling classes of any state, and it is no surprise that it would survive practically unchallenged until World War I, when class awareness finally became widespread enough for the challenge to exist and survive. It is also no surprise that the collective recollections of the Spartan state and of the historians who followed its tradition were marked by selective memory. Three groups were to be excluded from these recollections: the people who had been cowards in front of a common enemy, the political traitors, and those who did not belong socially. The exclusion of people who behaved dubiously on the battlefield, such as the Megarians and Phliasians at Plataea, or of political dissidents, such as the Thebans, could only be temporary; a later writer, Plutarch, would see that the accusations against the Corinthians at Salamis and other Greeks at Plataea would not remain unchallenged.³⁰⁷ The exclusion of people for social reasons, such as the inferior perioeci, Spartans without citizenship, and the very inferior helots, who were almost slaves of the Spartan community, would be final. Their inclusion would have meant that the Spartan state belonged to them too. For this reason, the names placed on the monument at Sparta were only those of the 300 Spartiates, the “true” heroes of Thermopylae.

Yet, although the Great Persian Wars served to define the values of the Hellenes vis-à-vis the rest of the world, they did not strengthen the political ties between the various cities. Actually, the leaders of the Great Wars, Athens and Sparta, would soon be at each other’s throat. Again, however, their wars would be the arena of the people who owned the state. The rest of the population either would be spectators or would participate only under the most stringent conditions and for a temporary period.

Chapter Four

Rich, Poor, and the Wages of War at the End of the Classical Period

"You die childless, Epaminondas," they cried bursting into tears. To this he replied, "No, by Zeus, on the contrary I leave behind two daughters, Leuctra and Mantinea, my victories." Then when the spear was withdrawn [from his chest] without commotion he breathed his last.

—Diodorus Siculus XV.87.5–6

Sailors and Social Status

The great confrontation with the Persian Empire should have taught the Greeks the crucial importance of sea power and the wisdom of including light infantry in the right conditions. After all, Salamis had been the key turning point of the Great Wars, and on at least one occasion, when the Athenian hoplites had relieved the besieged Megarians at Plataea, archers had shown how useful light infantry could be in the right situation. Yet for the remainder of the fifth century B.C. and for most of the fourth, warfare on Greek soil remained the privileged domain of the heavy infantryman. It was not only a matter of the conservatism typical of all military aristocracies but also the natural outcome of a societal arrangement in which prestige in the army was equated with prominence in public life. That it was so was shown, for instance, by the contempt that the Greeks had even for a branch of their own military power, the navy, that had been crucial against the Persians. Nevertheless, the navy would ensure Athens's dominance during the early stages of the Peloponnesian War.

It could be argued that the conduct of sea warfare entailed great practical difficulties. The elegantly slender Greek warship, the trireme, could be easily and quickly constructed. In a period of probably less than two years, between 483–482 and September 480 B.C., the Athenians built about 200 triremes. In 260 B.C., the Roman Duilius was able to launch 160 ships in 30 days. Six years later, the Romans built another 220 warships in 3 months.¹ Yet the structure of the triremes, more than the hurry in which they were built, meant that they were in constant need of repair.² For instance, the triremes of the Athenian Nicias had become useless as a weapon of attack by the fall of 414, a year after their departure from Athens to Syracuse.³

Triremes were light and quick, and under the right conditions, their rams could easily dispatch an enemy ship to the bottom of the sea. Yet this function also put the safety of the attacking ship into jeopardy. Of 274 ships listed in the Athenian inventories from 377–376 B.C. to 323–322 B.C., 15 triremes had sunk due to the vagaries of the weather, 115 had to be refitted, and only 19 were in proper condition to take the sea.⁴ Moreover, triremes were usually too crowded, with about 200 people, mostly rowers, in a boat about 40 meters long and between 3 and 6 meters wide.⁵

Their structure and crowded conditions meant that the warships had to hug the coastline and that they needed the land as much as the water. Crews had to beach their boats at night in order to cook their meals or to escape from the tension of their close quarters. Those who crafted the naval policy of the major sea power of Hellas, Athens, clearly recognized this need when they established control over a string of bases, one next to the other, to safeguard the communication lifeline during the Peloponnesian War.⁶

It is reasonable to assume that, if the fleet planned to use boarding as the main mode of attack, the number of marines aboard each ship could easily have been increased from the traditionally accepted 10 to 14 plus 2 to 4 archers.⁷ In unusual circumstances, the number of combatants could even reach about 45 hoplites, 10 archers, and 10 peltasts if the goal was not boarding but to outflank a land enemy.⁸ Yet this must have been rare. So many marines must have meant fewer rowers, which probably made a ship unstable and less maneuverable and thus an easier prey. When the Greeks used their crews in land operations, the usual pattern was to move the men in small parties, close to their boats, and they were unwilling and unable to tackle large land forces.⁹ However, there is no doubt that the navy could still play crucial roles in the waging of war in antiquity. The events at Plataea are inconceivable, for instance, without the success at Salamis. Sometimes, the Greeks too recognized the importance of their sea power. When Pericles' Athens became locked in the confrontation against the Spartans, for example, Athenian leaders consciously abandoned any plan to face their enemy on land and relied instead on control of the sea, not only for survival but also for victory. They were eventually defeated only when,

among other things, Athenian sea power had been crushed—partly as a long-term result of an ill-advised expedition to Sicily and partly because Athens itself finally met defeat on the seas at the hands of the landlocked Spartans, with Persian help. Yet even among the Athenians, any recognition of the importance of the sea was short-lived. Actually, the ancients (Plato and Aristotle, for instance) saw Athens's reliance on the sea not as a sign of its strength but as evidence of its moral and political disintegration.¹⁰ Fundamentally, the problem was not the role played by the navy but the way in which the ships were manned.

The triremes always contained a few members of the ruling groups among the officers.¹¹ In emergencies, even hoplites could be enlisted in the humble role of rowers. Certainly, this could have been the case during the Second Persian War. Otherwise, why were there no Athenians at Thermopylae? Also, in 428 B.C., 1,000 Athenian hoplites rowed their ships to Mytilene.¹² And of course, all of the marines, but not the archers,¹³ belonged to the same class as the hoplites.¹⁴ Yet the 170 rowers or so out of the 200 men in each ship were Athenian citizens of the lower classes (at least in the years following the Persian Wars), *metics* (that is, alien residents with limited civic rights), or slaves (as was increasingly common by the fourth century).¹⁵ But in all cases, the state could not let the humble rowers have their share of military glory. There was always the danger that they could translate such glory into civil prominence. If that happened, they, the landless people, could have become a threat to those who considered land ownership as the greatest goal of any citizen and war as the privilege of their class. Like most Western societies until recent times,¹⁶ ancient Greece regarded land property as the highest form of social status.

Spartan Society

Athens and its ambiguous attitude toward the navy are important in terms of pointing out the monopoly of the means of warfare that was exercised by men of property. But there is no better example of the supremacy of the heavy hoplite during the fifth and most of the fourth century B.C. than in the social and military arrangement of Spartan society.

Lacedaemonian society was divided into three main levels: the free citizens or Spartiates; the perioeci, inhabitants of the surrounding territories (i.e., free subjects who lacked the privilege of citizenship); and the helots, whose status was similar to that of the medieval serf—that is, they were not quite slaves but were tied to the land they worked and possessed very few rights. Sparta also included another group of people whose social status remains unclear—persons of Spartiate origin who had lost their citizenship either because they did not own a particular estate (*kleros*) or because they were unable to contribute their share of food to the communal mess (*syssi-*

tia or *phiditia*). Both the *kleros* and the *syssitia* were essential elements of Spartan citizenship.

All Spartiates followed a rigorous life pattern that began at birth and was designed to create good citizens.¹⁷ At birth, the child was taken by his father to the magistrates of the state, the *ephors*. If the child was thought to be unhealthy, the *ephors* left him to die. If the child was deemed healthy, the state would remove him from his family at the age of seven and take over his education until the age of thirty. At twenty, he was allowed to marry, but the state still required him to live not with his wife but in barracks with his male friends. By then, he had also reached the age for being a soldier. At thirty, he became a free citizen and could live at home, but he still had to eat his meals with his male friends in public messes, to which he contributed a monthly share of barley, cheese, figs, and wine. This system had two aims—to distinguish the Spartiate from the rest of society and to foster in him those physical and emotional characteristics typical of a good soldier—a strong body, a warlike spirit, a sense of camaraderie, and the habit of obedience.

No Spartiate had to worry about his livelihood, for each was the heir of the *kleros* that had previously been allotted to one of his ancestors. The *kleros*, which could not be sold, passed from father to son and could be divided or, in some cases, given away, probably if the owner had no heir. Also, all attempts were made to shelter the Spartiate from the temptations of material acquisition. Neither silver nor gold coinage was allowed in the state. Instead, old and heavy iron coins were used as money.¹⁸ But the state went further than prohibiting the minting of silver and gold, for the Spartiate could not own any precious metal coins even from other states, although the prohibition likely did not extend to the possession of silver and gold objects. Moreover, the Spartiate citizen was forbidden to engage in trade or commerce, the privilege of the *perioeci*.¹⁹ All this meant that, since *helots* worked his land, the Spartiate could dedicate his leisure time to gymnastics in order to strengthen his body and to the drills of the warrior.

The state's goal was to temper the body and toughen the mind of the Spartiate from his earliest age. The child of seven was allowed only one garment in all seasons of the year; he had to sleep on a bed of straw; his food was the simplest possible and just enough to sustain him; and he had to show moderation in drinking when wine was allowed later on in life. At the same time, he was subject to complete subordination to someone else at all stages in life—when a child, to his tutor; when a young man, to his seniors; when a mature man, to the magistrates.²⁰

As it can be easily discerned in any group association from the playground of preschool children to the football and soccer fields, the sense of camaraderie is a powerful agent in the military performance of an individual. And camaraderie was a constant feature of the Spartan state—from the

open or latent homosexual ties, which seem to have developed between children and their peers or tutors, to the Spartiates' behavior at every level of life. They ate in public messes;²¹ they could discipline another parent's children;²² they shared their horses and hunting dogs and their catch from the hunt;²³ and they used each other's slaves.²⁴ It was a pattern reinforced by both negative and positive sanctions. The coward who did not follow the group would be punished in the most cruel method of all—by being shunned by the rest of society. No one wanted to be seen with a man who had been ostracized or to eat with him or to play with him. If teams were made, he was the odd man out; he had to abandon his seat in favor even of a junior; in the streets, he had to give way to others; and at home, he was forced to live a lonely life without a wife, his sister without a husband.²⁵ He could not hold office, his membership to the communal mess was ended, he was forced to wear a cloak of distinctive pattern with colored patches, and he had to shave one side of his beard.²⁶ Even when he redeemed himself, as did Aristodemus who had not fought at Thermopylae because of an eye ailment but who fought with courage at Plataea, he still would not receive the praise that his action deserved.²⁷ By contrast, the people who conformed to societal rules received the praise and the esteem of peers and of the state, like the Thermopylae warriors. Moreover, their behavior was a source of inspiration for the rest, and they received the trappings that all castes try to give to their members, from the generals' uniforms and titles of the Napoleonic armies to the uniforms of the Italian Fascist youth groups to the typical Spartiate attire—a red cloak (a garment with the “least resemblance to women's clothing and [the] most suitable for war”), a bronze shield (it would polish quickly and tarnish slowly), and long hair (“it would make them look taller, more dignified and more terrifying”).²⁸

The Spartiates were even willing to rewrite the most traditional societal and familial arrangements in their attempt to create and sustain the perfect citizen-soldier. For example, stealing food, a harshly punished crime in most traditional societies, was encouraged among the young to heighten their warlike spirit. They were punished only if they were caught because it meant that they had not been clever enough.²⁹ The acquisition of money and the conducting of business, which even a most aristocratic society such as feudal Europe had to accept, were forbidden to all Spartiates so that the lure of money and the luxuries that gold could provide would not poison their minds.³⁰ The rearing of children, usually one of the most cherished, if difficult, privileges of family living, was taken up by the state. Their education was left to older members of the Spartiate class, not to tutors as in other Greek cities.³¹ In a land where a woman's fidelity was sacred and where the greatest injury would be suspicions about one's own paternal roots, the ties between husband and wife were tenuous since the man's whole life was geared toward allegiance to his male peers; it was also

proper for a man to ask someone else's wife to bear his own child, with her husband's consent.³² If a relative survived a military disaster, there was no joy but great distress among the relatives left at home. It was a different matter for those whose sons, father, or brothers "had fallen where they stood." They "went about like victors, with shining countenances and full of exultation in their own misfortune."³³ In a land that would be the foundation of Western civilization, Sparta, once the birthplace of the great lyrical poet Tyrtaeus, became barren of culture, limiting its contributions to festivals, contests, and Olympic games.³⁴ Like members of all societies with their minds set on the pursuit of a single, overwhelming goal (for instance, sixteenth-century Anabaptists or the people in some of the post-Lenin stages of Communist Russia), the Spartiates followed a conscious policy of anti-intellectualism.

The Spartiates, who called themselves *homoioi* (that is, peers or equals) in appearance were theoretically a harmonious society. In reality, however, as M. I. Finley has argued,³⁵ tensions and anomie (a breakdown of commonly accepted social norms and values) upset their society. The society of equals actually had a built-in system for creating inequalities. Two of its members were unequal at birth because they would become kings; others were more powerful than the rest because of their age (the *gerousia*, the council of 28 elders, was open only to people over the age of 60); some would be unequal because of their greater wealth; and others would perform better in their role as citizen-soldiers.³⁶ Moreover, both external and internal factors created a number of tensions. Take, for instance, the prohibition against owning gold and silver coins. It was extremely hard for any ancient army to disregard the lure of booty, and the Spartiates were no exception.³⁷ And it is rather ironic that the same society that forbade the ownership of gold and silver coins should acquire a reputation for avarice and greed in the rest of Greece.³⁸ Moreover, Sparta's victory in the Peloponnesian War brought untold riches to the city in 404 B.C.,³⁹ which likely created new strains between rich and poor. Finally, the Spartiates were a small minority in their own state: 1,000 hoplites in a land that could sustain 1,500 horsemen and 3,000 heavy infantrymen, according to Aristotle.⁴⁰ And even if we discount these figures, which referred to Sparta's decline in the later part of the fourth century, and move back to the fifth century, still the largest force that the Spartans could raise during the times of serious peril in the Great Persian Wars totaled 8,000 hoplites in 480, reduced to 5,000 the year after at Plataea.⁴¹ At Leuctra, the battle that ended Sparta's hegemony over Greece, there were only 700 Spartiates,⁴² the same number present more than a century later, in 243.⁴³

This development was inevitable since the dynamics of Spartan society worked against the renewal of the citizen body.⁴⁴ The division of the *kleros* among all descendants, including females, meant that in the longer run,

fewer and fewer people could contribute to the communal mess, resulting in loss of their citizenship status. The situation became very serious because Spartan policy did not change with the passing of time. Instead, Sparta tended to make the conservative laws established in the distant past even more stringent. Military success became a curse because of the destabilizing influx of new money and the corrupting influence of contacts with the outside. A case in point is Pausanias, who, after his victory at Plataea, enjoyed a lifestyle of personal self-glorification and high living, quite different from the sober lifestyle of a Spartan in his own state.⁴⁵ The situation forced Sparta to adopt two approaches—on one hand, to resort to the noncitizen perioeci and at times to the dispossessed helots to meet its military needs and, on the other, to be in a continual state of internal vigilance against the same groups of people, especially the helots. This also meant that what was potentially the most warlike society of ancient Greece showed enormous reluctance to wage war. The enemy within, whether in the form of the helots or of the perioeci, was more feared than the enemy without. And the fear was often warranted, as the revolts of the helots of mid-460 and 370 would prove.⁴⁶ At times, the fear assumed paranoid proportions, as seen in the massacre of 2,000 helots during a dangerous stage of the Peloponnesian War. The Spartans had promised citizenship to all those helots who had served bravely in the war, and two thousand of them stepped forward to claim the reward. In a mock ceremony, probably to calm their fears, garlands were placed on their heads. Then the helots were taken away and secretly executed. The Spartan goal must have been to eliminate the most ambitious and militarily dangerous subjects in their midst in a moment of external danger for the state.⁴⁷

The inequalities and tensions that beset Spartan society clearly show that the ruling classes' monopoly of warfare was jealously guarded, even when more prudent considerations should have dictated an open policy on the part of the Spartiates both to lessen the potential of internal disorder and to increase their power in dealings abroad. Yet by the beginning of the fourth century, there were forces afoot in Greece that would weaken the relationship between social status and military role, resulting in new arrangements by the end of the century.

The Mercenary System

Mercenaries were not a new phenomenon in Greek society. The tyrants of the archaic period, before the Great Persian Wars, had often used them, especially as their personal guard. Mercenaries, however, had played no role in the Greek armies during the great confrontations against Darius and Xerxes. It was in the dramatic conflict of the Peloponnesian War, when Greek cities engaged in mutual slaughter from 431 to 404 B.C., that the

mercenaries appeared in increasingly greater numbers.⁴⁸ They were at least 20,000 in the eastern Mediterranean alone by the middle of the fourth century and about 50,000 in the army of Alexander the Great in 329.⁴⁹ Eventually, they would constitute the core of the Hellenistic armies.⁵⁰ This would have important repercussions not only in the relationship between the military and society but also in the actual conduct on the battlefield.

A mercenary was a different species from the citizen-soldier of the Persian Wars. He had no stake in the land that hired him. The land, the houses, the women and children did not belong to him. Whatever he owned followed him on the battlefield—his woman or his male lover, his possessions, his money. His allegiance as a citizen, if he still was one or if he still felt any attachment to his homeland, was usually directed toward a state far away. Citizen-soldiers (or at least some of them) also fought for the profits that war might bring them, yet their main concern must always have been defending their freedom and the freedom of their relatives. The mercenary had no ideals of this kind: He fought for his wages and for the prospect that the enemy's defeat would result in the acquisition of booty. The military duties of the citizen-soldier who fought as hoplite were rather simple. Of course, the same was true of the mercenary who had the role of hoplite. More likely, however, he was a specialist. His trade was to make war, and he usually concentrated on activities that either required a great deal of training, such as wielding the sling or the bow, or were associated with low social prestige on the battlefield.⁵¹

Mercenaries came from all parts of the Mediterranean basin (Crete, Rhodes, Sicily, the Balearic Islands, North Africa), from mainland Greece (Acarnania, Achaëa, Sparta), or from areas farther inland (the Russian steppes or the lands of the Persian Empire). As G. T. Griffith argues, at least three conditions must exist for the emergence of mercenaries: war or the prospect of war, communities willing to pay for the services of hired practitioners of violence, and individuals willing to kill for causes that are not ideologically theirs.⁵² All three conditions existed in the Greek world of the later part of the fifth century and the earlier part of the fourth.

The defeat of the Persian host at Plataea in 479 B.C. brought four decades of peace to the Greek states, but from 431 onward, practically no year passed without a major confrontation on the Greek mainland, on the seas surrounding it, or in the distant colonies of southern Italy. At first, the major contestants were Athens and Sparta, with the latter ending as the winner by 404. Soon after, a new city emerged to challenge Spartan hegemony over Greek society. From 395 B.C. to 362 B.C., Thebes met Sparta over and over again on the battlefield, ending surprisingly with a Theban victory in two great battles—Leuctra in 371 B.C. and Mantinea nine years later.

War alone did not necessarily involve the use of mercenaries. Armed conflict had been endemic to Greek society from the very beginning, whether

there was an outside enemy or not. Why, then, did it now become open to outsiders? The wars waged before the armed conflict between Athens and Sparta had usually followed a pattern that brought a minimum of disruption to peoples' lives. Wars had been constant, but they typically had been waged a short distance from the city-state, during the period in which the citizen could combine or at least juggle without ill effects his duties as a soldier with his economic and family roles. Moreover, although wars had been constant, they had not lasted for long periods of time. For instance, the first Great Persian War had ended with one battle at Marathon. The Second Persian War had lasted a little less than two years, at least as fought on Greek soil. The theater of war between Athens and Sparta encompassed most of the Mediterranean and lasted twenty-seven years. It was one thing to fight briefly a few kilometers from one's land and quite another to be away from one's family for years, at distances that must have seemed immense in the ancient world. Moreover, it was one thing to fight next to the city walls on flat land that emphasized and strengthened the characteristics of the heavy infantryman and quite another to confront the enemy on terrain unsuited to an armored soldier holding a spear. More men were needed than the small Greek states could possibly provide, as well as people able and willing to fight in a manner different from that of clashing phalanxes. Still another factor was necessary for the emergence of a mercenary system on a large scale—the availability of men willing to leave their homelands for the sake of profits as practitioners of organized violence.

The career of arms has always provided fascination for some groups of people, from Xenophon's Ten Thousand, fighting in the heartland of the Persian Empire, to the superficially romantic French Foreign Legion. Occasionally, the profession attracted adventurers and members of the upper classes, such as Xenophon. Yet, according to Griffith, adventurers who "might occasionally prefer to do something dangerous rather than do nothing at all"⁵³ were rather rare in Greece, although this was not necessarily true in lands outside the perimeter of Greek political and cultural control, such as the Balearic Islands, Thrace, and North Africa. There were a number of political exiles among Xenophon's Ten Thousand, but again, political reasons seem not to have been the most powerful stimulus for the creation of a mercenary force.⁵⁴ Economic pressure or financial greed, coupled with the availability of an expanding market in the profession of arms, was probably the most important factor in providing a steadily increasing supply of mercenary forces. At least in Attica, the fourth century brought economic displacement and pressure.⁵⁵ At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles had realized that the only way Athens could match Sparta's military prowess was by conceding the control of Athenian land to the enemy, while keeping control of the seas. Such an approach had worked well for many urban Athenians since, unlike the Spartans, they could still gain great wealth from trade and from

the profits of imperial control. But others, especially the smallest landowners among the agriculturalists, would reap no such benefits.

Victor Davis Hanson has strongly argued that the impact of crop devastation was less harsh than originally thought, at least in terms of lasting damage.⁵⁶ Grain could be burned only in early summer; otherwise, it had to be cut down, which implied a long, laborious process—a task not always easy to accomplish for most armies. Olive trees could be destroyed only if uprooted; otherwise, they would resume production within six or seven years. And given the obstacles that nature provided or man built to hamper the destructive action of enemy armies, crop damage must normally have been more limited than originally thought. Farming in Attica, for instance, resumed soon after or even before the end of hostilities.⁵⁷

I wonder whether Hanson's argument might apply not only to the large or medium-sized farmer but also to the small landowner, for whom even the loss of a few vines and a few olive trees must have been a serious matter. First of all, as Hanson says, the psychological damage must have been profound. One solution would have been to find some capital, replant the olive trees and vines that had been damaged, and wait for the moment when the output of these cash crops could again give the small landowner a modest living. The problem, however, was that this approach needed capital investment and a long time—factors that prevented any positive solution at least in the short run. A six- or seven-year delay before resuming production for the vines and olive trees would be an economic eternity in most societies, especially in a preindustrial environment where resources were scarce. Moreover, it is likely that the farmer of the time was also faced by other changes behind his control. Cereals, which could still be grown while he waited for the vines and olive trees to grow, were imported cheaply from non-Greek lands. Another alternative would have been to forget his land and to turn his attention to trade and industry, but here again, probably in part because of cultural reasons, the transition must have been much harder than it seems. Thus, for many, the career of arms was probably the best solution. They could learn as they proceeded. Moreover, there were immediate gains. This pattern was repeated over and over again in most poor warlike societies, from antiquity to at least the Renaissance period. That mercenary pay was not higher than the lowest pay in civilian life was not an impediment.⁵⁸ First of all, even the most menial occupations must have been rather scarce in an economy ravaged by war. Second, the most prosperous economy of all preindustrial states could provide only a few jobs. Third, pay was just a part of the mercenaries' economic gains since they would also receive prizes if they distinguished themselves on the battlefield and a share of the booty.⁵⁹

The inclusion of paid soldiers, who were not fighting for ideals and had no stake in the state that they were serving except for monetary gain, tended

to erode the jealously guarded privilege that had made the role of warrior an extension of the role of citizen.⁶⁰ The full impact of this development would occur later, yet it was felt by the early fourth century in the increasing tendency of citizens to regard their military service as an economic, not a civic, function. For instance, in 383, Sparta paid as a matter of course the soldiers of the confederacy that it headed.⁶¹ But it was not only a matter of pay since soldiers, even before the fourth century, had received some financial compensation for their service. The use of mercenaries on a grand scale also meant that the occasional generals of the fifth century tended to become permanent. This must have seemed a welcome innovation in the affairs of war. The quick turnover of elected generals, which had been the case everywhere except in Sparta where the kings were usually the generals, often meant that the leadership was inadequate. People such as Miltiades and Themistocles had been the exception, not the rule. The mercenary leaders of the fourth century would show that the extended leadership of one man could be more effective in waging war. Efficiency and the ideals of democracy often did not mix. Granting military leadership to a person for a long time eroded the concept of both democratic and oligarchic government in favor of some form of autocracy. The emergence of states with one-man-rule systems, such as the Macedonia of Philip and his son Alexander the Great, must be seen both as a reflection of the ability of strong rulers and as the logical outcome of a process begun by the condottieri of the fourth century.⁶²

Tactically too the inclusion of mercenaries opened new possibilities for the business of waging war. The actions of some of these paid warriors violated the main rules of hoplite warfare. The mercenaries preferred mobility to mass, broken terrain instead of the open fields next to city walls, and self-reliance more than the trust of community spirit. It is not a surprise that before the fourth century, most Greek battles were rather straightforward encounters, in which one army type, the heavy infantryman, was pre-eminent. Even if available, other army types could be neither controlled nor easily integrated into the battle plan. But mercenaries, being mostly lighter soldiers, had less need to rely on a system in which the whole was paramount and the unit unimportant. This made possible a more imaginative use of different units and weapons and probably indicated the road to follow to the great Theban general Epaminondas and most of all to Philip and especially Alexander.⁶³ The truth is that the daring possibilities opened by the inclusion of mercenaries remained untapped for most of the first half of the fourth century. It was very hard for citizen-soldiers to accept a system that questioned their ownership of the state and could also spell the end to their right to wage and profit from war. Yet the dramatic collapse of the invincible Spartans on the island of Sphacteria in 425 B.C. had clearly shown that, in certain conditions, light infantry could be employed not only for specialist activities but also to defeat the heavy hoplite.

Hoplites and Light Infantrymen

The engagement that pitted Athenians and Spartans in 425 B.C. on the coast of Messenia, on the western side of the Peloponnese peninsula, had begun like a cat-and-mouse game. The Athenians had been the prey at the beginning, but after defeating the Spartan navy, they had turned into the hunter. The Spartan hoplites and helots, who had landed on the island of Sphacteria to cut down any Athenian who tried to escape the Spartan navy from the neighboring coast, were now trapped. The Spartan plan, like the Persians' landing at Psyttaleia during the battle of Salamis, had gone awry, but the Athenians of the Peloponnesian War thought twice before repeating the action that had brought the destruction of the Persians on the small Greek island in 480 B.C. For one thing, Sphacteria was bigger than Psyttaleia, and the terrain was more rugged and covered by trees and shrubs that seemed to provide opportunity for innumerable ambushes; for another, Spartans were of a different mettle than the more lightly armed Persians.⁶⁴ For the moment, the Athenians decided to blockade the island and starve the Spartans into submission since it was known that the island had no source of food and that even the water was "brackish."⁶⁵ The blockade would last 72 days,⁶⁶ broken by a 20-day truce. During the truce, the Spartans dispatched a mission to Athens suing for peace, and the Athenians let in a limited amount of food (barley, flour, wine, and some meat⁶⁷) for the starving Spartans on the island. The request for peace went nowhere, and the Athenians tightened their blockade again.⁶⁸

The Spartans were in a very difficult position although they were not completely cut off from their supply line, for a trickle of food still reached them either through the prowess of swimmers or through the daring of small boats that evaded the surveillance of the Athenian triremes. Sparta had issued a proclamation promising money and even freedom to helots who succeeded in breaking the Athenian stranglehold of the men on Sphacteria.⁶⁹ The position of the Athenians too was becoming increasingly difficult in an area with a dearth of landing places, far away from a supply of food and water. Therefore, after the negotiations broke off, Athens decided to overrun the island and sent some reinforcements so that the enterprise could be achieved more easily.⁷⁰

The Spartans, who, as the Athenians were later to find out, numbered 420 hoplites and a similar number of helots,⁷¹ had deployed their forces into three positions. A contingent of 30 hoplites guarded the southern tip of the island, where the threat of enemy landing was more severe since the ground was level. A small number of soldiers were in an ancient fortification on the northern tip. Their main force was on level ground in the center of the island under their commander, Epitadas, ready to intervene where the situation demanded (Figure 4.1).⁷² It was an excellent deployment that

made any landing quite difficult since cliffs and rugged terrain limited possible landing spots for the Athenians.⁷³

Two things helped the Athenians. First, a fire destroyed most of the cover on the island, removing the Athenians' fear of an ambush.⁷⁴ Second, when the Athenians landed a little before dawn, they caught the southern guard post unprepared to face the attack.⁷⁵ The Spartans manning the post had taken no precautions when the Athenian ships approached the coast the night before. They had failed to realize that the landing was the prelude to an invasion, not the usual night beaching to escape the dangers of an open sea.⁷⁶

The Athenian hoplites, who easily overran the guard post and slaughtered the Spartans while still in their beds, quickly secured a beachhead for the rest of their forces. There had been about 800 hoplites at first landing.⁷⁷ They were followed by some Messenian reinforcements, 800 bowmen, as many javelinmen, and the crews of 70 Athenian ships (at least 7,000 men)⁷⁸ armed as well as they could manage.⁷⁹ Demosthenes, the Athenian general, divided his troops into groups of 200 and advanced to gain the high ground and thus surround the main Spartan force in the center of the island.⁸⁰ It was a deployment aimed at total destruction, and it maximized the qualities of the Athenian host with its 1,600 missile men (half bowmen and half javelinmen) and a large number of people who could use slings and stones when standing on higher ground than the enemy.⁸¹

The Spartan hoplites chose the usual way of dealing with the situation from their repertoire of hoplite warfare. They went for the Athenian counterpart to engage them in a hand-to-hand battle. But Demosthenes had changed the rules: There was something new in store for Epitadas and his Spartan soldiers. The Athenian hoplites stood still to receive the charge, but at the same time, their light troops pressured the enemy on the flanks and rear (presumably from higher ground) until the Spartans, faced by enemies from all sides, realized that they could not come to grips with the Athenian hoplites.⁸² The lighter troops tormented the Spartans with arrows and came as close as possible to them while launching their javelins; when the Spartans charged them, they retreated quickly, wheeling back again once the hoplites had stopped their rush. The tactic was well suited to men "lightly equipped" who found it easy "to take to flight in good time since the ground was difficult and . . . naturally rough." The Lacedaemonians, who were in heavy armor, were unable to pursue them over such a terrain.⁸³ But even if they could have done so, the Spartans would hardly have wanted to pursue their tormentors, for if they caught up with the light troops, they would open themselves up to an attack from the Athenian hoplites.

The counterattacks of the Spartans became sluggish with the passage of time, while the Athenians and their supporters, who had once been afraid to join battle with the Lacedaemonians, became more and more contemptuous of them, "hurling at them stones, arrows, or javelins, whichever each

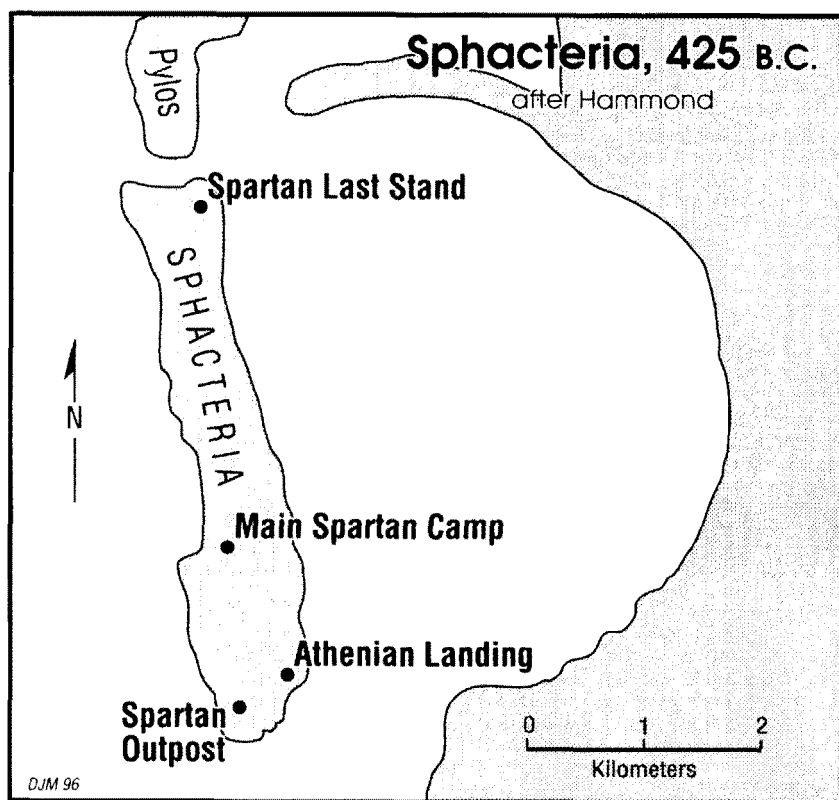


FIGURE 4.1

man had to hand.”⁸⁴ The situation became desperate for Epitadas’s men, who were almost surrounded by the enemy and unable to counter their attacks. They chose the only way out: They closed their ranks and retreated to their fort on the northern tip of the island, tormented in their withdrawal by the Athenian light troops, who again caused more casualties.⁸⁵

The fort gave the outnumbered Spartans a certain security and also changed the tone of the battle. Its position apparently made an encircling action impossible, and the encounter returned to the normal pattern of hoplites against hoplites. The only way to dislodge the Spartans was to attack them frontally, which meant using no light troops but only heavy infantrymen against their enemy counterparts.⁸⁶ The Athenian hoplites advanced in battle array but made no gains against the stubborn Spartans now enjoying the advantage of higher ground.⁸⁷

The deadlock was broken when the commander of the Messenians went over and asked for some archers and light troops. He planned to climb one

side of the fort, which seemed unapproachable, and to attack the Spartans from the higher ground and thus re-create the situation that the enemy had to face in the central part of the island. The daring action succeeded: "With great difficulty he barely succeeded in getting round unobserved and suddenly appeared on the high ground in the enemy's rear."⁸⁸

Thucydides compares the situation of the Spartans to their last stand at Thermopylae. "The Lacedaemonians were now assailed on both sides," he writes, "and—to compare a small affair with a great one—were in the same evil case as they had been at Thermopylae."⁸⁹ After a while, weak in body for the lack of food and after some negotiations, they surrendered. Of the 420 original hoplites, only 292 remained. We do not know how many of the original hoplites were Spartan citizens, but among the prisoners, only 120 were Spartiates.⁹⁰ Nothing is said, as usual, about the helots.

"Of all the events of this war," says Thucydides, "this came as the greatest surprise to the Hellenic world."⁹¹ The myth of Thermopylae had so conditioned the Greek mind that "men could not conceive that the Lacedaemonians would ever be induced by hunger or any other compulsion to give up their arms, but thought that they would keep fighting as long as they were able."⁹² Among the Greeks, there was almost a feeling of dismay that Sphacteria had endangered the lesson of Thermopylae. But Sphacteria could teach something much more important about the conduct of war. The answer that one of the survivors gave when confronted by the insulting remark of a captor, an Athenian ally, is illustrative. The Athenian ally had needled him by asking whether the Lacedaemonians who had fallen were "brave men and true," that is, implying that the survivors were cowards. The Spartan answered "that the shaft, meaning the arrow, would be worth a great deal if it could distinguish the brave, intimating that it was a mere matter of chance who was hit and killed by stones and bow shots."⁹³ His answer was not only the personal defense of a man who had endured 72 days of blockade and who, at the last moment, had been caught in a hopeless situation, it was also an admission that the hoplite was not invincible against other types of troops in certain conditions. However, Greece stubbornly refused to accept this lesson. Regardless of its usefulness, some historians say,⁹⁴ the light infantry had to be disregarded in favor of retaining the old system in which the soldier was also a citizen who at least had the financial ability to buy his own armor and who embodied the values of the ruling class.

The historians who favor the idea that the Greek states retained the concept of hoplite warfare because it was also the most efficient system—A. J. Holladay, for instance—approach the problem from two angles. On one hand, they present "negative" arguments, that is, they explain why light infantry would have been ineffective; on the other, they advance "positive" points, maintaining that the clash of heavy infantrymen against each other

was the most effective form of military engagement. It is clear, they say, that light infantry troops were ineffective. The battle of Plataea in 479 B.C., for instance, is ample proof that the Persian lighter soldiers were inferior to hoplites.⁹⁵ If light infantrymen were effective, it is inconceivable why the Greek states would not have used them at least in times of great peril.⁹⁶ And it is not accurate to maintain that the Greek ruling classes were afraid of using the poor or the people who were not recognized as citizens. The Spartans are a case in point. They normally integrated the noncitizen perioeci and the semislave helots into their military machine not only as servants but also as heavy infantrymen.⁹⁷ But it is also clear that hoplite warfare was the best method of all. Otherwise, why would the hoplites have been hired as mercenaries elsewhere, from Egypt to Persia?⁹⁸ True, light troops were most effective in broken terrain and thus in holding one of the many passes of the Greek landscape. However, with a few exceptions, Greek passes could be easily turned either by amphibious landing or, as in the confrontation between Thebes and Sparta, by land operations.⁹⁹

Most of the points that Holladay puts forward in support of his view that hoplite warfare was the only system that made sense are at least debatable. It seems reasonable to assume that the Persian light infantry may have been no match for the Greek hoplites in a frontal confrontation. Yet at Plataea, for instance, even the modest light infantry of the Greeks, the Athenian archers, could perform a crucial role during the Persian assault against the Megarians. Moreover, when the retreating Spartans were caught up by the pursuing Persian cavalry, Herodotus clearly states that heavy infantryman and light infantryman stood next to each other.¹⁰⁰ It is not surprising that he ignores them afterward, except in the discussion of the booty,¹⁰¹ and that he does not specify what their role was in the fight against the Persians on the left wing: After all, the battle had to remain the private domain of the hoplite. Even Thucydides' presentation of their actions at Sphacteria ends up with a list of the casualties of the hoplites, but no mention is made of the light infantry on both sides.¹⁰²

Unacceptable also is the argument that the Greeks would have developed light infantry in time of peril if they had thought them to be effective. Effective light infantrymen, whose training was a long and extensive process, could not be created overnight. Moreover, their inclusion would have meant rethinking the whole tactical approach to the battlefield. In other words, one needed to plan long before the time of need and in a situation in which there was no peril present and thus no urgency to change the established patterns. Without doubt, the Spartans used perioeci and helots as hoplites. But the whole approach of the most militaristic Greek state shows that the need to use the disenfranchised limited the state's ability to carry an effective warlike policy abroad. Moreover, when confronted with the extermination of even a relatively few Spartiates, as happened at Sphacteria,

Sparta was ready to compromise and sue for peace.¹⁰³ Arming perioeci and helots as hoplites also meant that only a relative few of the disenfranchised would actually wage war, for only a few, at least among the helots, could likely afford to buy their armor. If the state were to buy their armor, one of the fundamental notions of the citizen-warrior—ownership of his own armor—could be placed in jeopardy.¹⁰⁴ Finally, training the helots as light infantrymen would have implied that practically all able males in society's midst could become foes of the regime. It is no surprise, then, that when they needed light infantry during the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans usually hired or relied on outsiders, mercenaries or allies, who could be used and then sent home when the situation demanded.¹⁰⁵

The positive argument also has its weak spots. The popularity of the hoplite as mercenary abroad does not necessarily imply that he was considered the most efficient practitioner of warfare. If we judge effectiveness on the basis of popularity alone, then we could argue, for instance, that the popular crossbowman, probably the most hired mercenary of the High Middle Ages, was also the most effective practitioner of war on the European battlefields of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In reality, it would have been hard to raise an effective heavy infantry force in most parts of the Persian Empire. To attempt to do so would mean running afoul of the military traditions of most of the subjects, except for people such as the Ionian Greeks. Moreover, such a force could not succeed in an environment where autocratic attitudes ruled city life. Hoplites could still become an important part of the Persian military machine—but always as auxiliaries, not as the determining factor. The horse and bow remained supreme among the Persians. Finally, the point that guarding the passes would be useless because passes in Greece could normally be turned is at least questionable. True, passes had been easily turned since at least the seventh century B.C., as P. Cartledge says, but, of course, this was mainly because no Greek state seems to have had the manpower to man *all* the passes. Cartledge argues that they could have done so by training the poorer classes to act as camp servants and as light infantrymen too.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, one of the striking differences between Rome and the Greek cities was the ability on the part of Rome to field much larger armies than any Greek state. However, it is hard to determine whether this was the result of a larger territory or a higher birthrate or simply an extension of the role of warrior to larger strata of the population.

The other method of turning the passes, the use of amphibious operations, would have been very difficult to carry out against a well-prepared enemy. For example, in the first stages of the Sphacteria campaign, the Athenians had been the prey and had feared a Spartan landing on their fortified position on the mainland facing the island of Sphacteria. Because of this, Demosthenes had selected 60 hoplites and a few archers for "the point where he thought it most likely that the Lacedaimonians would try to

land." It is true that the area was also "rough" and "rocky,"¹⁰⁷ but the fact that such a small number of men could prevent the enemy from landing shows how difficult the task must have been in the face of a determined adversary. Besides this, any landing in enemy territory would have necessarily implied a number of logistical problems—a most important restraining factor, for instance, for the Persian fleet during the Great Wars.

Yet Holladay is correct when he maintains that in certain conditions, using the hoplite in a phalanx formation was, at least before Alexander's pikemen, the most awesome form of waging war.¹⁰⁸ It was control of the plains, not of the passes, that mattered in ancient Greece because the plains housed most of the wealth of the ancient world. No army could be satisfied with control of the mountains or of the hills while enemy armies ravaged the territory from which it took its living. Sooner or later, it had to come to the plains to face its enemy, and once there, light infantry could not really compete against the mass and power of a hoplite phalanx. The only exception to this rule was Athens during the Peloponnesian War—not because Athens did not treasure the land but because, unable to meet Spartan might on land, it could survive by control of the seas. The situation in ancient Greece was similar, as E. N. Luttwak has argued,¹⁰⁹ to the control that the Romans exercised on their subject people who lived in large towns. The Romans could not come to grips with the dispersed Germans, but they could certainly bring the Gauls to their knees because Gauls centered their lives around urban centers. The same applied to the Greeks. Their wealth was in the plains, next to their city walls. They could temporarily run to the hills, but eventually, they had to come down to defend their fields and their cities' gates. Once there, his city's walls behind him, the heavy hoplite was the king.

Yet the problem of hoplite versus light infantry, looked at from this angle, gives a distorted view of the situation. According to this view, the lighter soldier was more effective in broken terrain, the hoplite was clearly superior in the plains, and it was on the plains that most battles were fought in the ancient world. But there is another way of looking at the problem. Hoplites, supported by light infantry, could have been more effective than they already were on flat terrain. It is clear that at Sphacteria, it was a combination of hoplites and light infantry that brought down the Spartans. But at Sphacteria, one could argue, the terrain was rugged, and thus the example cannot be applied to the normal hoplite encounters on flat terrain. For this, the best indication comes instead from another episode—the destruction of a Spartan *mora* (battle group) near the walls of Corinth in 390 B.C.

The most popular form of light infantryman to emerge out of the Peloponnesian War was the peltast.¹¹⁰ Originally from Thrace, this type of soldier soon spread throughout Greece. His name came originally from the word *pelte*, a shield shaped like a crescent. Armed with more than one

javelin, usually longer than most, his favorite tactic had been clearly shown at Sphacteria: to run against the enemy, throw a javelin, wheel back if attacked, and return again to torment the aggressor who had stopped the rush. Moreover, protected by a linen corselet and a lighter shield and armed with a longer sword and apparently a longer and stronger javelin, he could be a much more formidable adversary for hoplites, especially in broken terrain. The engagement near the Corinthian walls clearly showed the usefulness of this type of soldier. In the spring of 390 B.C., a group of Amyclians manned the walls of Lechaenum with Spartan soldiers.¹¹¹ It was their custom at that time of the year, even when they were on campaigns, to return home for the festival of Hyacinthia. The problem, however, was that their route to Amyclae passed near the walls of enemy Corinth, where a number of Athenian hoplites under the command of Callias and peltasts under the command of Iphicrates were stationed. The Spartan commander of the garrison decided to allow the Amyclians to go but with the escort of a Spartan mora (about 600 hoplites¹¹²) and a number of cavalrymen.

The Athenians offered no challenge to the passing Amyclians and their Spartan escort when they reached the walls of Corinth. At a distance of 5 to 7 kilometers from the city of Sicyon, the Spartan commander unwisely separated his hoplites from the rest. He ordered his cavalrymen to accompany the Amyclians up to Sicyon and then to join him and the hoplites on their way back. It was a mistake for which he would pay dearly. When he again passed near the Corinthian walls, Callias and Iphicrates realized that now the Spartan mora, without support from its own cavalry and the Amyclians, could be challenged and defeated. The hoplites lined up in battle formation while Iphicrates and his peltasts approached within javelin distance (probably 30 meters or so) and launched their weapons. When the younger Spartans—the 20- to 30-year-olds¹¹³—were told to pursue them, the peltasts easily outran the heavier opponents. The moment the Spartans gave up their pursuit, Iphicrates' men wheeled back and attacked again. This time, the Spartans of 20 to 35 years of age were ordered to pursue their tormentors but again to no avail.¹¹⁴ Actually, when they turned back, the Spartans suffered even more casualties. Some relief, however, seemed finally on the way when their cavalry, which had escorted the Amyclians up to Sicyon, finally returned. This time, both hoplites and cavalrymen pursued the peltasts, but again they failed to come to grips with them. Xenophon ascribes their failure to the action of the horsemen, who instead of catching up with the fleeing peltasts, kept in line with their own slow-moving hoplites.¹¹⁵ But A. J. Anderson rightly argues that the horsemen had little choice but to stop.¹¹⁶ If they had continued their charge without the support of their own hoplites, they would have had to deal with the Athenian hoplites, who had assumed a battle formation. By themselves, there was really little that they could do.

While their casualties mounted and their enemies became increasingly bold, the Spartans retreated to a small hill, less than 750 meters from the sea and over 3.5 kilometers from Lechaum. The garrison in Lechaum, aware of the plight of the Spartans, sent them some boats so that the besieged Spartans could finally escape from their attackers, but when the Spartans did so, it was in a manner that dishonored their reputation. The Athenian hoplites had just decided to play a more active role by moving directly against the Spartans on the hill. It was too much for the Spartans, who broke and fled, some plunging into the sea and some escaping with their cavalry. Of the original 600, about 250 were killed on the field.¹¹⁷

The lesson of the destruction of the Spartan mora was not that the best peltasts could defeat the best hoplites on level ground but, as Anderson says, that even the best hoplites could be defeated by "a skillful combination of heavy and light infantry unless they were themselves adequately supported by other arms."¹¹⁸ This example and a number of others that Anderson discusses in his book also raise another question.¹¹⁹ The key issue of the debate about hoplites versus light infantry is not that the light infantry could ever have beaten the hoplites on level ground but that the hoplites would have been much more effective if, as Alexander would find out, they had been supported by other arms. True, there was a sound, practical reason why the Greek states were reluctant to develop light infantry. The hoplite needed practically no training. His social habit of attending the gymnasium, at least for the well-to-do hoplite, or working on the land assured that he would be in good physical condition without special training. Fighting in line with a limited number of maneuvers on the battlefield, except for the Spartans, also meant that what he needed was not formal training but a strong sense of social duty that would prevent him from abandoning the line, thereby betraying his comrades. Peltasts, for instance, needed much more training than the hoplite.¹²⁰ Well-trained peltasts, such as Iphicrates' men near Corinth's walls, could perform brilliantly. But even Iphicrates, probably the greatest general of light troops of the ancient world, could not perform miracles. When in charge of a less well-drilled force (at Corcyra, for example), his campaign might be successful in other ways, but he could not defeat hoplites.¹²¹ But extensive training, of course, would have meant keeping men under arms and thus under pay even during periods of peace. In other words, badly trained light troops were ineffective; well-trained light troops were effective but expensive. In the long run, hoplites were probably cheaper and more cost effective. As Hanson argues, hoplite warfare was "economically frugal."¹²²

Yet even this explanation does not tell the whole story. There were other powerful reasons not to develop light troops. As W. H. McNeill has argued for the military of most periods,¹²³ there must have been a reluctance to change in the ancient period. The introduction of the peltasts on a large scale

would have meant rethinking the whole approach to the battlefield. It would have implied a new etiquette for the conduct of war. It would have meant, for instance, the possibility of surprise attacks on enemy camps, night encounters, and ambushes—all things that were extremely unusual in the Greek world, as Pritchett has shown. Iphicrates did conduct ambushes at Abydos and elsewhere, and the other famous general of light troops, Demosthenes, again did conduct a night attack, but both cases (if we exclude the actions of barbarian Thracians) remained oddities in which peltasts, not hoplites, were involved.¹²⁴ It is also indicative of the whole attitude to war that there is no word for surprise attack in the Greek dictionary.¹²⁵

The acquisition of property belonging to other people always played an important role in ancient warfare. A man fought not only because the role of warrior was an extension of his role as a citizen but also because successful war brought him economic gains. To include other people, such as the poorer classes, would have meant sharing the booty. We do not know how important greed was in terms of excluding others from sharing the wages of violence, but it must have been a powerful incentive for keeping other people from waging war. Finally, as long as the military role was an extension of the civic role, the inclusion of other classes would have necessarily meant a revolution in the social arrangement—again, an unpalatable and unlikely shift, considering the natural reluctance to social change. Lower classes could be admitted into the military structure only when the large-scale admission of mercenaries and the shifting of decisionmaking from the citizenry to one man or a small group of men had come to separate the military role from the social function. But this was to happen only when the Macedonians crushed the independence of the Greek states and when one-man rule replaced the cities' oligarchies or democracies. It is natural, then, that the great battles that closed the classical era of warfare would again be the private domain of the hoplite, not of the peltast.

Thebes's Challenge of Spartan Supremacy

When Sparta became embroiled in conflicts against Thebes in the first half of the fourth century, it seemed at first an uneven struggle—pitting the most warlike of the Greek states against a city that, at least until 425 B.C., had been regularly beaten by an adversary, Athens, that the Spartans had already vanquished. Instead, the end product of these wars would shock the whole of Greece. At Leuctra in 371 B.C. and at Mantinea nine years later, in 362 B.C., the Thebans, under the command of Epaminondas, the most brilliant Greek general before Alexander, decisively beat the Spartans and ended their hegemony over the rest of Greece. Epaminondas's victories were, on the one hand, a symbol of the greatest sophistication that hoplite

warfare ever reached; on the other hand, they indicated the road that future generations of warriors would have to follow.

The success of the Thebans was not an overnight creation but had been in the offing for about half a century. It had begun in 424 B.C., when the Thebans had rather unexpectedly defeated the Athenians in a pitched battle at Delium. The Theban ace in that battle seems to have been the presentation of an unusual phalanx formation, much deeper than the usual 8 or 12 men.¹²⁶ The next stage in the experiment came in two other battles, fought thirty-one years later, in 394 B.C., at Nemea and at Coronea. In both battles, the Spartans would defeat a combination of allies, among whom the Thebans were to play an important role. At Nemea too, the Thebans made their phalanx "exceedingly deep" and then proceeded by inclining to the right to envelop the Spartan allies of the left wing.¹²⁷ The Thebans successfully routed their opponents, but their army lost the battle, which was decided on their left. There, the Spartan right wing had first routed the Athenians, then it had wheeled left, hitting the enemies on the flank and mowing them down as they advanced from the right to the left. Actually, their advance across the battlefield even reached some of the Thebans, who were slaughtered while returning from their pursuit of the Spartan allies.¹²⁸

At Nemea, the deep Theban phalanx had shown that it could defeat a shallower line, although it had been used in a manner that indicates its potential was still not clear in the Thebans' mind. Xenophon's text shows that their aim had not been to crush through the enemy line and thus maximize the mass and power of a very deep line (or should we call it a column?) against a thinner formation; rather, the aim was to outflank the line in the manner of a much more agile and presumably shallow unit: "They [the Thebans] veered to the right in leading the advance, in order to outflank the enemy with their wing."¹²⁹ It is a mistake that they seem not to have repeated at the battle of Coronea, which was fought in the same year as Nemea.

Xenophon does not specify whether the Thebans adopted a deeper line or whether they crushed, instead of trying again to envelop, the Spartan allies of the left wing.¹³⁰ Yet the development of the encounter suggests just this. Moreover, the end result does point out a higher sense of discipline and toughness among the Thebans. Instead of escaping the battlefield in disorder as they had done at Nemea, this time they changed front completely and squarely faced the Spartans, who had also vanquished the enemy left wing and had now reversed front to fight the Thebans returning from pillaging the Spartan camp. "Setting shield against shield they [the Thebans and Spartans] shoved, fought, killed, and were killed. Finally some of the Thebans broke through and reached Mount Helicon, but many were killed while making their way thither."¹³¹ The battle had been "like no other of the battles of our time."¹³² Yet the Thebans had been vanquished again.

The Thebans had shown that they could overrun their opponents and that their nerve could make them the match of the Spartans. Their problem was, however, that they had chosen the wrong opponent with which to start. At Coronea, they had come to grips with an enemy (the Spartan allies) whose defeat could not decide the battle, but later, they had to face a foe (the Spartans) whose spirits were high after routing an opponent without striking a blow: "The Argives did not await the attack of the forces of Agesilaus [the Spartan king] but fled to Mount Helicon."¹³³ The solution was to keep the massive attack of a deeper line, to concentrate initially on the Spartans, and to prevent the rest of the Theban line from coming to grips with the enemy so that there would be no danger of a reversal of front with the enemy appearing on the flank. It was the lesson that Epaminondas would put to the test at Leuctra, but four years before the great battle, there had been a dress rehearsal in a small engagement at Tegyra under the leadership of Epaminondas's friend Pelopidas, the dashing commander of the Sacred Band.

The Sacred Band was an elite unit of 300 warriors, founded in the aftermath of a struggle in Thebes between pro- and anti-Spartan forces. There was nothing new in the existence of a special unit among Greeks and non-Greeks. We know that there were such units at Syracuse, Argos, Arkadia, Elis, Boeotia, and Sparta and among the Persians and the Carthaginians.¹³⁴ But the Sacred Band distinguished itself for a number of characteristics. Its members had no economic worries since the state provided for their upkeep; training stressed wrestling instead of dancing; strong patriotic principles were part of the indoctrination process; members might have specialized in attacking the heart of the enemy line, where the commander in chief stood; and finally, the unit was composed (as Plutarch, our main source for the Sacred Band, says) of homosexual pairs, except for their leader Pelopidas.¹³⁵ Plutarch's contention is not surprising in a society like ancient Greece, where homoeroticism was not unusual and where, as Daniel Ogden argues, it might have been associated at times with the elite of the army—the Sacred Band at Thebes, the Royal Pages in Macedonia, and probably the hippeis at Sparta.¹³⁶ A number of Greek intellectuals supported the notion that homoeroticism was appropriate within the military occupation. For instance, both Plato and Plutarch believed that the pairing of homosexual lovers brought a new dimension to the spirit of camaraderie that is at the heart of all military units: Now the warrior had to keep his face vis-à-vis not only his neighbor but also his lover.¹³⁷ This belief was also reflected in Xenophon, who argued that homoerotic relationships "might well be honourable, and motivate men to valour in battle."¹³⁸ Yet Xenophon, like the rest of the Greeks, remained ambivalent about the positive aspects of homosexuality. He seemed to associate passion with danger. This meant

that one of the prominent characteristics of a military leader was his ability to resist erotic attraction toward other men while on campaigns.¹³⁹

Initially, the members of the Sacred Band had been deployed with the other warriors of the phalanx, but at Leuctra, they would fight as a separate unit. They had also operated as a separate unit when they met a Spartan contingent at Tegyra in 375 B.C. Pelopidas was caught during the return from a relief expedition while crossing an area bounded by hills on his left and a swamp on his right.¹⁴⁰ He had 300 hoplites and some cavalry under his command. When his men spotted 2 Spartan morai (a minimum of 1,000 to a maximum of 1,900 soldiers¹⁴¹), they ran to him in great distress. "We have fallen into enemy's hands," they cried. "Why not they into ours?" retorted Pelopidas. Then he ordered his cavalry to charge straight at the Spartan phalanx while his hoplites closed their ranks and followed the horsemen.

The two lines clashed, with the Thebans striking directly where the Spartan leaders stood. Probably when the Spartans realized that it would be hard to defeat the Thebans, they opened their ranks to let the enemy escape. Pelopidas did not accept the invitation but cut his way into the middle of the enemy phalanx until the Spartans broke and fled, their two leaders dead on the spot. It was a battle that "first proved to the rest of Greece that it was not only the Eurotas [the principal river of Sparta], nor the country between Babyce and Cnacion [the Eurotas's tributaries] which bred brave and warlike soldiers."¹⁴²

Thus, Tegyra was a showcase for the bravery of the Thebans, and it also taught some new lessons—how hoplites could profit in attacking a phalanx first disordered by the cavalry, how the best strike was to the core of the enemy's formation where the leaders stood, and why breaking through the enemy was not enough, especially when the opponent was as skilled as the Spartans. At Nemea too, the Spartans had let some of their opponents break through by opening their ranks to strike them from the shieldless side. Pelopidas's solution had been much more daring. Instead of trying to escape and save his life, he had gone for the killing punch: He had infiltrated the enemy ranks and cut them down where their superior numbers were not necessarily an advantage. These were all lessons that did not escape the brilliant mind of Epaminondas.

Unlike his friend Pelopidas, who liked to cultivate his body, Epaminondas spent most of his time reading and discussing philosophy.¹⁴³ We do not know much about him. Plutarch's *Life* has not survived. Xenophon seems to ignore him at least until Mantinea, in the account of which he clearly marvels at the man's cleverness. But it seems that the defeat of the Spartans was a constant preoccupation for Epaminondas. Peace for the Thebans could be possible only on terms of justice and equality—an option unacceptable to the Spartans.¹⁴⁴ It is also clear, as his deployments at Leuctra

and later at Mantinea show, that he had studied the Spartans at war and had learned well the lessons of Nemea, Coronea, and especially Tegyra.

At the beginning, Leuctra¹⁴⁵ seemed not to bode well for Epaminondas. He had no alternative but to fight because refusal to engage the Spartans would have meant rebellion of the smaller cities against Thebes and eventually submission of his own city to Sparta; his own life would likely have been endangered as well. He had left Thebes preceded by omens that seemed to indicate his struggle against the Spartans would end in disaster. He had with him a number of allies whose loyalty was suspect and whose lack of enthusiasm in combat was fairly certain. He was also outnumbered, probably by a factor of 3 to 2, by the Spartan host.¹⁴⁶ But the Spartans too had their problems. Their king, Cleombrotus, had never commanded an army in a major pitched encounter.¹⁴⁷ Yet he felt compelled to do battle because he had been accused of cowardice and treason for not bringing the Thebans to battle during a previous expedition.¹⁴⁸ He had more men than the Thebans' 6,000, but most of them were allies whose loyalty was even more suspect than was that of the Theban allies. His contingent of Lacedaemonians, the heart of his troops, probably did not number more than the Thebans.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, only 700 of them were Spartiates,¹⁵⁰ the rest conceivably perioeci.

Epaminondas's preparations for battle were a masterpiece in the psychological battering of the enemy. Before leaving Thebes, he had interpreted the unfavorable omens in a positive light, predicting a victory for his army.¹⁵¹ Now on the field, he first overcame the reluctance of a number of generals on his side. In the manner of the Athenians at Marathon, the Theban leaders too (6 generals in all) were undecided on the course to take. They all shared the opinion that the Spartans had to be opposed, but 3 of them were for withdrawing to Thebes and standing a siege, and 3 others (Epaminondas among them) were convinced that the time had come to confront the enemy on the battlefield. The deadlock was broken in favor of immediate conflict when a seventh general, arriving late, sided with Epaminondas.¹⁵²

In the meantime, Epaminondas had proceeded to strengthen the confidence of his men and to erode that of his enemies. Voices spread the news that Heracles' arms had disappeared from his temple in Thebes and that the god himself would come to the battlefield in support of the Thebans.¹⁵³ The Spartans could not win at Leuctra not only because of Heracles but also because, in the past, Spartan soldiers had raped on that very field two Theban virgins, who had then taken their own lives rather than live with the memory of the violence.¹⁵⁴ The Thebans also did not have to worry about the enemy's numerical superiority, Epaminondas said. He compared the small number of Spartiates to the head of a snake that he had caught. He showed the animal to his troop and then crushed its head.¹⁵⁵ His message was clear:

Let us destroy the Spartiates, for then the enemy army would be left without life.

The Spartans deployed in a thin line 12 men deep¹⁵⁶ and about 750 meters long on the flat battlefield (Figure 4.2).¹⁵⁷ Cleombrotus and his Spartans were, as usual, on the right of the phalanx. Epaminondas's line extended only for about 405 meters.¹⁵⁸ The Thebans themselves occupied the left wing, grouped in a formation that was at least 50 men deep¹⁵⁹ with a front of 75 to 80 men.¹⁶⁰ Both sides gave an unusual position to the cavalry. The first to do so were the Spartans, who deployed it in front of their right wing. The Thebans followed with a countermove by placing their own cavalry in front of their left, that is, opposite the Spartan horsemen.¹⁶¹

As Plutarch's text implies,¹⁶² Cleombrotus's decision to deploy his cavalry in front of his Spartans must have followed Epaminondas's deployment of most of his troops in a very deep line opposite the Spartan troops. As the experience of the previous battles of Nemea and Coronea had shown, a deeper line, given time, would eventually overcome the resistance of a thinner phalanx. But a line that sacrificed length in favor of depth was also open to an outflanking movement. In other words, Cleombrotus must have thought that, if his line contained the initial onslaught of the Thebans, he could encircle the Thebans and bring them to their doom.¹⁶³ To carry out his plan, he needed to screen his maneuver with his cavalry.

Cleombrotus's plan never came to fruition. Epaminondas must have suspected such a maneuver, especially on the basis of studying the battle of Nemea or the engagement at Coronea. But it could also be that the Theban cavalymen, heirs of a proud tradition, were clearly superior to the Spartan horsemen¹⁶⁴ and, remembering their exploit at Tegyra, may have decided on their own to press their enemy counterpart. The result was that the Spartan cavalry was defeated and routed. Now disaster struck the Spartan line. Their horsemen in flight crashed into their own men,¹⁶⁵ disordering the hoplites while they were in the difficult process of extending their line in order to encircle the advancing Thebans.

Epaminondas had advanced at an oblique angle, with his wing jutting in front and the rest of the line refused.¹⁶⁶ His intention was to crush the head of the snake, the Spartan wing, as Polyaeus so colorfully puts it.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, although the interpretation here is fraught with difficulties, he probably stationed Pelopidas and the Sacred Band as the spearhead of his wing.¹⁶⁸ When Pelopidas saw the disorder of the Spartan line, he struck forward.¹⁶⁹ As at Tegyra, his point of contact was where the leader, in this case Cleombrotus, stood.¹⁷⁰ At the beginning, Pelopidas's action must have succeeded just in pinning the enemy and no more, for, as Xenophon remarks, when Cleombrotus fell, his men were able to withdraw his body while he was still alive—an unlikely feat if their line was in great difficulty.¹⁷¹ But it was simply a matter of time now. The deeper Theban

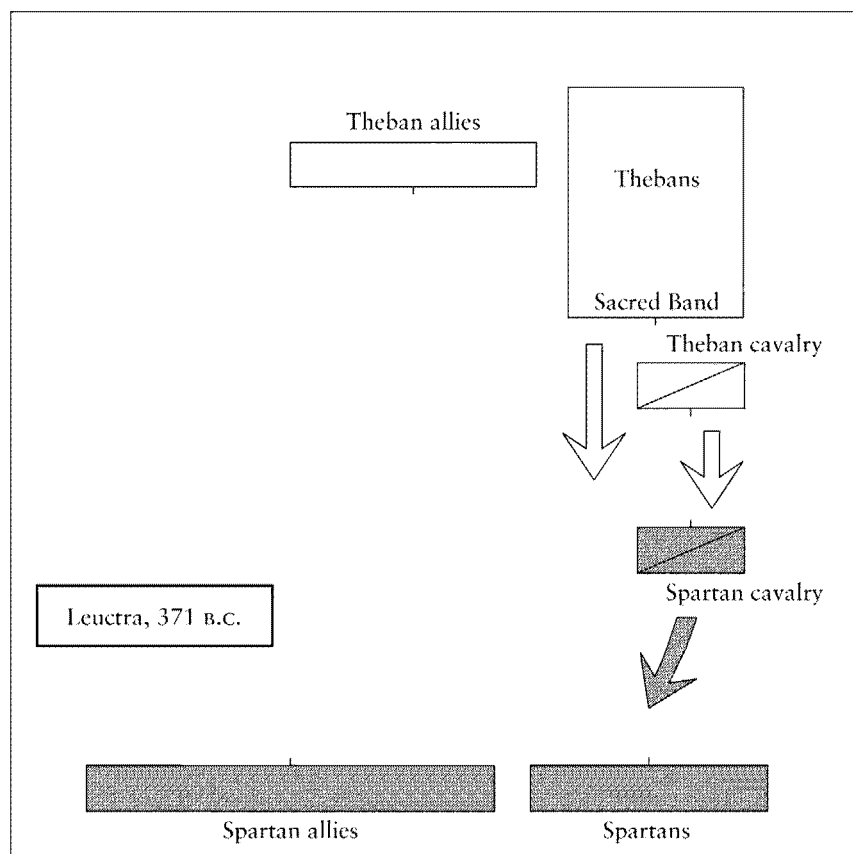


FIGURE 4.2

phalanx could exert much greater pressure. In the end, it crashed the Spartan right wing. Broken, their king killed, the Spartans withdrew to the safety of their camp, leaving about 1,000 of their men on the field. Many of them were Spartiates. There had been 700 Spartiates before the fight; now only 300 were left.¹⁷² Considering that only a small part of the two armies, the right wing of the Spartans and the left of the Thebans, were engaged in battle and that the Spartans were killed during the fight and not in rout, the high casualties suggest again that Epaminondas must have studied the previous battles, especially Tegyra. When they broke the line, his men must have infiltrated the enemy ranks for a harsh, pitiless struggle. In the meantime, the remainder of the Spartan line, the allies, stood idle. They could not do otherwise. If they advanced to meet the rest of the Theban line, they would have found themselves in danger of being encircled had the Lacedae-

monian right wing been defeated before the conclusion of their engagement. If the Lacedaemonians kept the Theban left long at bay so that the Spartan allies could attack the Theban juggernaut on the flank, the allies too would expose their own side to the refused wing of the Theban line.

Xenophon, who still remains our most reliable source in this matter, gives a cryptic, bitter account of the battle. His main interest is to explain why his political patrons, the Spartans, lost. He says that Cleombrotus never wanted to give battle,¹⁷³ that the Spartan leaders made the decision to deploy after drinking too much wine,¹⁷⁴ that the Spartan soldiers had begun under the psychological handicap caused by the story of Heracles and the account of the raped virgins,¹⁷⁵ that their cavalry was untrained,¹⁷⁶ that their allies were unreliable,¹⁷⁷ that their phalanx was too shallow,¹⁷⁸ and that the fleeing cavalry had disordered their line.¹⁷⁹ However, most of this was nothing new. Such conditions had existed before—their inferior cavalry, unreliable allies, shallow phalanx, even the reluctance to engage in battle as, for instance, with Pausanias at Plataea. Yet in the past, the Spartans had still won. The truth was that at Leuctra, they had found their masters. The Thebans' victory over the Spartans had been brewing for about a quarter of a century, since Nemea at least. The different pieces of the puzzle of how to break the Spartans at last were there. It was Epaminondas's genius to have put them together. In the process, he not only defeated his enemies but also brought the art of hoplite warfare to its highest sophistication. However, at his next great victory, Mantinea in 362 B.C., a spear brought his life to an end. As he lay on the field, he first summoned his shield-bearer to ask him if he had saved his shield. When he was assured of this, he asked then if they had won. Yes, was the reply. As he heard this, he turned to the people around him and asked his friends to withdraw the spearpoint from his body. "It is time to die," he said. But the friends raised their voices in protest: Epaminondas had already been warned that if they withdrew the spear, he would die. "You die childless, Epaminondas," they cried bursting into tears. "To this he replied, 'No, by Zeus, on the contrary I leave behind two daughters. Leuctra and Mantinea, my victories.' Then when the spear point was withdrawn, without commotion he breathed his last."¹⁸⁰

Epaminondas was right. His victories not only closed an era but pointed the way to the future. His oblique formation and his reliance on surprise would become the mainstay of many a great general. But as befitted a complex man like Epaminondas, he also left, especially at Mantinea, unfinished but tantalizing bits of lessons on the use of other arms besides the heavy infantryman. However, these were lessons that the Greek city-states of his time were unable and unwilling to accept. It was people at the margins of the Greek world, men such as Philip II of Macedonia and his son Alexander, who would take these lessons to heart.

Chapter Five

Footmen, Horsemen, and the Symbols of Military Might

Anaxarchus began the subject, saying that it would be far more just to reckon Alexander a god than Dionysus and Heracles, not so much because of the many achievements of Alexander, but also because Dionysus was a Theban, and had no connection with Macedon, and Heracles an Argive, also unconnected with Macedon, save by Alexander's descent, for he was a son of Heracles; but that Macedonians were more justified in honouring their own King with divine honours. For in any case there was no doubt that when Alexander had passed away from men they would honour him as a god; how much more just, then, that they should honor him in life rather than when dead, when the honour would profit him nothing.

—Arrian IV.10.6–7

The Macedonian Army

Twenty-three years after Mantinea, in 338 B.C. on the fields of Chaeronea, the armed forces of a number of the Greek city-states met a new foe to their independence—the soldiers of the upstart king of Macedonia, Philip II. At Chaeronea, however, there would be no miracle like Marathon or Plataea, nor would the winners be ephemeral conquerors like the Thebans at Leuctra and Mantinea. The Macedonians had come to stay.

Four years later, in 334 B.C., the combined forces of Macedonians, allied Greeks, and mercenaries crossed the Hellespont and brought war to an empire where “everybody . . . save one person [the king] has trained himself to servitude rather than prowess.”¹ Within an eight-year period, Greek-speaking people would rule from the shores of the Indian Hydaspes to the rocky

Balkan beaches of the Adriatic and from the savage mountains of Bactria to the golden sands of the Sahara. The conqueror, Alexander of Macedon, was the son of the winner of Chaeronea, Philip; his main tool of conquest was his fellow Macedonians—the backbone of the greatest army ever seen.

Macedonia was a region geographically and culturally at the margins of Hellas, the Greekness of her inhabitants only grudgingly recognized by some and often challenged by others.² Also, the Macedonians could claim neither the cultural achievements of their Greek cousins to the south nor the memory of their military glories against the Persians. Actually, on the eve of Alexander's invasion of the Persian Empire, "the Greekness of the Macedonians, long a matter of doubt, had become a subject of renewed argument and propaganda."³ This anti-Macedonian campaign was mainly the work of Athenians who, in the words of Demosthenes, had saved the freedom of Greece. The Macedonians instead had been subservient to the Persian Empire and had even ridden with Xerxes during the Great Wars, albeit rather unwillingly, at least according to Herodotus.⁴ However, there is little doubt that they were related to the Greeks. They spoke a Greek dialect, they probably originated from a similar racial background, and finally, they would adopt most of the aspects of the civilization of the cities on their southern border. Moreover, if less flamboyant and sophisticated than their Greek cousins, the Macedonians had been more successful politically in the long run. Although they were a racial minority in their own state, they had firmly subjugated the other inhabitants of the region, translating their role as political masters into a racial monopoly of the military machine.⁵ Also, their natural resources gave them a potential for growth that no Greek city could match. The Macedonian land was rich in the type of timber crucial to the maritime economy of most Greek states, their rocks stored good supplies of gold and silver, and their agricultural soil was relatively rich when compared to the barren land of most Greek cities.⁶ Furthermore, the Macedonian character had for decades been forged in the school of daily danger. If mutually destructive warfare had been the key feature of the Greek city-states, external threat had normally marked the daily life of the Macedonians, with the usually hostile Illyrians lying to the west and north, the fearsome Thracians to the north and east, the Greek Thessalians on the south, and the occasional advance of the Persians from across the Hellespont. The experience and memory gained from those encounters would be key elements in helping Philip II, Alexander's father, to shape men who had fought for survival into conquerors of the world.

The army that Alexander inherited from Philip was the product of a number of traditions; the importance of each component is difficult to assess.⁷ The heavy infantry was at least initially an outgrowth of the Greek tradition, but daily contact with the plains of their southerly neighbors, the Thessalians, had enhanced the Macedonians' tendency to develop and rely

on cavalry as well. The threat coming from their mountain foes on the west, north, and east must have taught them the usefulness of light and mobile troops in rugged terrain. The Thracians—the fiercest warriors imaginable, who, according to Herodotus, could have formed the greatest state on earth if they had only stopped quarreling among themselves⁸—must have set an especially compelling example on the importance of surprise and of deviance generally from the established norms of hoplite warfare, a trend that Philip's contact with the Thebans between 369 and 367 might have enhanced.⁹ Philip was just 13 or 14 when he arrived as a hostage at Thebes two years after Leuctra and eight before Mantinea, and it is conceivable that he learned something from contact with Epaminondas's new ideas about warfare. If this is correct, it is rather ironic that Epaminondas's "daughters," Leuctra and Mantinea, left as his inheritance to the Greek world, would find a home not at Athens, Sparta, or Thebes but in Philip's half-barbarous land on the border of the Greek world. Philip II would integrate into a new and revolutionary mold what for Epaminondas had been experiments and variations on the established canon of hoplite warfare.

The key of the Macedonian army would eventually be the delicate balance between the different types of soldiers and especially the fine complement of cavalry and heavy infantry. Yet though the emphasis on horsemen had been a constant of Macedonian history, the same apparently could not be said of the heavy infantry before Philip II. Macedonia's social basis prevented the formation of an army along the lines of the Greek polis. Macedonia had a very wealthy landowning class but only a small middle class. In other words, the country lacked the essential ingredient of hoplite armies: a middle class monopolizing political power. If the middle class was too small, the rest of the ethnic Macedonians were too poor to provide the connection between arms ownership, citizenship, and warrior status. Philip solved the problem by revolutionizing the armor of the heavy infantry. Gone were the most expensive items of the hoplite panoply—the large helmet, shield, and cuirass—to be replaced by a simpler and lighter helmet, a smaller shield, and no cuirass or a more limited chest protection. Gone too were the spear of about 2 to 2.5 meters, held with one hand, replaced by a pike (the sarissa) about 5 meters in length and held with two hands. Gone as well was the association of the heavy infantry with the ruling classes of the state, replaced by an opening of the ranks to all ethnic Macedonians, who were probably also provided with free weapons and equipment.¹⁰ Furthermore, the ritual of seasonal engagement with the same enemy year after year had ended; now the country was constantly under arms.

The adoption of the sarissa allowed a more effective formation than the hoplite system. The Macedonian phalangites could project up to five spear-points ahead of each man. Moreover, the pike's long head (about 27 inches) meant that the metal of the head and of the foreshaftguard protected the

pikes of the following rows, creating "a literal hedgewall of steel."¹¹ The rest of the phalangites, from the sixth to the eighth row, and sometimes those deployed as deep as sixteen rows held their sarissa sloping upward at an angle and thus created a barrier against arrows and other missiles.¹²

Philip's new heavy infantry was not an overnight sensation but the result of a long reign (of 24 years) during which Macedonia was almost continuously at war. Also, the phalangite formation would not have been so successful without other reforms. Upper Macedonia and the region between the rivers Strymon and Nestos were annexed to the kingdom; social and economic conditions were improved; and urban civilization spread. All this resulted in a greater recruitment pool (Philip doubled the number of citizen troops¹³) and eventually in an increase in the birthrate. Yet this would not have been enough without more changes: training and drilling the new phalangites, using them in increasingly difficult tasks, boosting the numerical strength of the cavalry by almost 500 percent (600 in 358, 2,800 in 334 B.C.¹⁴), establishing a number of elite units, experimenting in deviations to the well-known canon of hoplite warfare, understanding success on the battlefield in terms of total annihilation of the enemy, and the establishment of a siege train.¹⁵ By the time the Macedonians were ready to march into Asia, about 1 man in 10 of all Macedonian citizens was serving in the army.¹⁶ These were the soldiers that Philip bequeathed to his son Alexander.

The army that Alexander mustered in 334 B.C. against the Persian Empire numbered around 90,000 men (Figure 5.1).¹⁷ About 36,000 of those were employed on 182 warships, and 9,000 more were in charge of supply vessels and the siege train. This meant that Alexander had at his disposal about 45,000 troops, of which 8,000, probably Greek mercenaries and Macedonians, were deployed on the west coast of Asia Minor and not with the nucleus of about 37,100 men with whom Alexander crossed the Hellespont.¹⁸

The sources of recruitment for this nucleus of 37,100 men were varied.¹⁹ The Macedonians contributed about 12,000 heavy infantry in all (phalangites and hypaspists), that is, about 37.3 percent of the footmen,²⁰ and 1,800 heavy horsemen,²¹ about 35.2 percent of the cavalrymen. Also recruited from within the borders of the Macedonian kingdom but not of Macedonian ancestry were about 900 light cavalry. About 600 of them, the so-called *prodromoi* (the scouts or lancers), were of mixed origin; the other 300 were equally divided between Paeonians and Thracians. Some of the 500 or so archers also were inhabitants of Macedonia, although most of them seemed to have come from various other places, including Crete.²²

The next source of Macedonian recruitment was in the territories of their neighbors—comprising about 7,500 light infantry (500 of them were Agrianians, and the rest were Odrysians, Triballians, and Illyrians).²³ These people were all from the upper part of the Balkan peninsula. On the south,

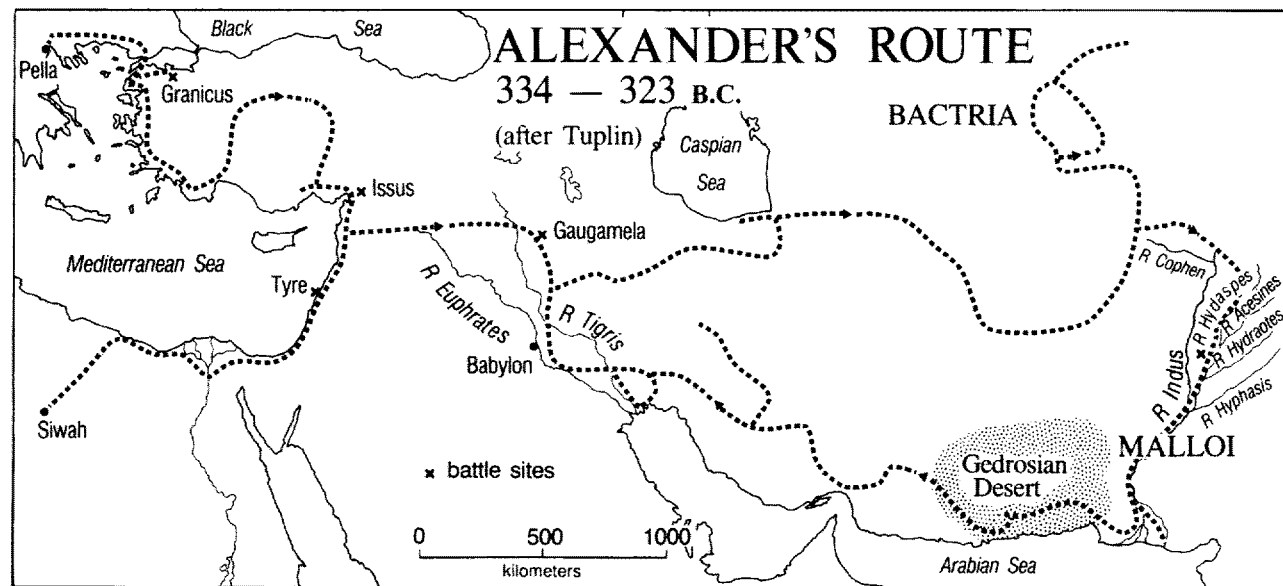


FIGURE 5.1

another neighboring state, Greek Thessaly, provided 1,800 cavalrymen, that is, half of the heavy cavalry and about a third, or 35.2 percent, of the total number of horsemen.²⁴ The third source of recruitment was in the Greek allied states—which contributed 7,000 heavy infantry (about 21.8 percent of the nucleus's footmen) and probably 600 light cavalry (about 11.7 percent of the horsemen).²⁵ The fourth source of supply was mercenaries. Five thousand of them, likely peltasts (about 15.6 percent of the infantry), came from Greece.²⁶ It is likely that at least a part of the Balkan contingent also served under Alexander as mercenaries, not as members of states that had to provide military support because they were either under the control of the Macedonians or within their sphere of influence.

Only 4 out of every 10 people of the main nucleus, the 37,100 men under Alexander's command, were Macedonians then; the rest came from other sources—2 came from allied Greece, a little less than 2 were Greek mercenaries, and a little more than 2 were from the neighboring states of the Balkan peninsula. These proportions would change considerably if we also include the advance party of 8,000 dispatched along the coast of Asia Minor and if we accept that many members of the Balkan contingent were also mercenaries, not allies. Yet the most important aspects of this statistical profile are that, on one hand, the Macedonians constituted less than half of their own army (13,800 in all out of 37,100) and that, on the other hand, they also occupied the most crucial points of tactical deployment—all of their infantry and cavalry was heavy. Moreover, within these specialties, they had a clear majority in heavy infantry (12,000 Macedonians against 7,000 allied Greeks) and were the equals in the heavy cavalry (1,800 Macedonians against 1,800 Thessalians).

Unlike the armies of the period of hoplite warfare, Alexander's army presented a finely balanced array of different troops. There was 1 cavalryman for every 6 footmen, which was a necessity for an army on the way to conquer a vast empire. About 59 out of every 100 infantrymen were heavy troops, at least 15 were peltasts, 23 were light infantrymen (javelinmen and probably also peltasts), and less than 2 were archers. The preponderance of the heavy types is even clearer in the cavalry, where they monopolized more than two-thirds of the contingent; to this, we should probably add the 600 prodromoi, or about 10 percent of the cavalry. The prodromoi were armed with the sarissa, but it was shorter than the one used by the infantry.²⁷ This suggests the possibility that they too were trained to fight as heavy cavalry. But the land army under Alexander tells only part of the story when we consider that about 10 percent of the 90,000 men at Alexander's disposal were deployed in supply or siege roles, that another 8.8 percent were used to establish and probably control the eastern part of Asia Minor, and that 40 percent (about 36,000 men) manned the 182 warships.

If mobility and troop diversification were key features of the Macedonian army, another striking element was the tendency toward elitism within the

ranks. Although all the Macedonians could probably claim a higher position than the rest of the force, there were also gradations of prestige within the ranks of the Macedonian troops. The army was built like a pyramid, with the king at the top, followed by Macedonians and then Greeks, allied troops, and mercenaries; prestige decreased from the top of the pyramid to its bottom.

For example, the Macedonian heavy cavalry, or Companion cavalry, as it was called, was divided into fourteen squadrons of 200 to 225 men each, 8 of which accompanied Alexander in his invasion of Asia. About half of the 14 squadrons served as his personal bodyguard, and 1 squadron among them, the Royal Squadron or *agema*, fought directly next to its king. This pattern was closely followed in the Macedonian heavy infantry, which included three main groups: Foot Companions or men from lower Macedonia, Townsman Companions or men from Macedonian towns, and the hypaspists. The Companions were divided into 14 brigades, each of about 1,500 men, for a total of about 21,000. A little less than half of them (3 brigades of Foot and 3 of Townsman Companions, for a total of 9,000 men) went with Alexander. Their structure too followed a pattern of elitism. For instance, there was a special group of Foot Companions who followed the king on special ceremonies and who fought next to him in battle.²⁸ But the highest position of prestige within the infantry structure seems to have been given to the 3,000 hypaspists or shield-bearers. They were, N.G.L. Hammond maintains, the king's own infantry. All of them went with Alexander when he invaded Asia.²⁹

The inclusion of different army units and the creation of elite groups within them was not a new phenomenon in warfare. Consider, for example, the Spartan hippeis or the Theban Sacred Band or Xerxes' Immortals. In terms of different troop types, the Persians again provide a splendid example with their heavy and light archers, heavy and light spearmen, and the bewildering varieties of cavalry. And if the Persians seemed not to have been able to integrate the various units into a harmonious whole, consider the Theban Epaminondas who combined hoplites, light infantry, and cavalry in a very good balance at Mantinea. Yet Epaminondas remained the great exception of his age. No other commander before Philip and Alexander was able to prompt every element of his army to play its role on cue in the midst of the battlefield's mayhem. This was because both Philip and Alexander suited their requests to the advantages and limitations of the different army types.

The Macedonian heavy infantry was clearly inspired by the Greek hoplites. It deployed in a phalanx formation (which was longer than it was deep); it relied on serried ranks; and it treasured its *esprit de corps* more than individual bravery, thus measuring its efficiency as a collective entity, not in personal terms. Yet, as discussed earlier, there were crucial differences between phalangites and hoplites: the weapons (*sarissa* against

spear³⁰), the armor (little or no armor against heavy armor), the shield (0.62 meters against 0.914 meters³¹), the tactical deployment (5 spearheads against 1 or, at the most, 2³²), the phalangite's social status (the phalangite was superior to non-Macedonian combatants, but he was not part of the ruling class of the state—a role reserved to the aristocracy). Although it is nonsense to imagine Alexander's phalangites to be a match, for instance, for the Roman legionaries in terms of flexibility, a reading of Arrian clearly conveys the image of a phalanx able to engage in maneuvers unknown to classical Greece, with the possible exception of the Spartans.³³ The Macedonian phalanx could fight not only in the typical long line made famous by the Athenians at Marathon but also in a variety of formations. It could become a column for greater penetration (much like the Thebans at Leuctra), either its front unbroken or in an oblique stand with one of the two flanks refused; it could assume the form of a square as protection against horsemen; or it could form a wedge and, like a ship's ram, batter the line of its opponents in preparation for the final blow.³⁴

The reasons for the mobility of the Macedonian phalanx are varied. The phalangites carried less armor than the hoplites, and their shields, now hung from neck straps, no longer required the rigid position of the hoplite phalanx. Yet in spite of its mobility, the Macedonian phalanx still remained a rather cumbersome formation, at its best only on flat or relatively flat terrain and still vulnerable on the flanks and rear. However, Alexander's phalanx could either transform some of its members into lighter soldiers or it could rely on a relatively vast array of light infantry to protect its flanks. In the first case, I assume, as Hammond maintains, that the hypaspists normally fought in a phalanx formation and thus with a sarissa but that, on occasion, they could also operate in a more open role with a different weapon and in lighter armor. Or, as Markle argues, it may be that the hypaspists were always armed with the more manageable hoplite spear.³⁵ If either scenario is correct, then it meant that 3,000 men out of 19,000 Macedonian and Greek heavy soldiers (to use the number of Alexander's effectives at the crossing of the Hellespont) could either operate on the flanks of their phalanx or engage in individual operations in areas where the heavy, closely serried soldier was at a disadvantage. Also, one-third of Alexander's infantry at the Hellespont, 12,500 men in all, was made up of lighter soldiers who could fight at their best in broken terrain. The only shortcoming his army had was in long-range firepower since only 500 of the 32,100 footmen seemed to have been archers. But probably this was not a bad arrangement because missile units, except at Granicus, apparently played a minor role in all major battles. Yet in spite of the continued importance of the phalangite, one of the other keys to Macedonian success was the cavalry.

When the Thebans had met the Spartans at Leuctra, the performance of their cavalry had been an essential element in bringing the Spartans to their

knees. But Leuctra remained an oddity in this respect when compared to what had happened before on Greek battlefields.³⁶ Moreover, the Theban cavalry probably had been enmeshed in the mainstream of the battle by chance more than by deliberate plan. It would not be so with Alexander, whose battle plans were usually centered on the crucial role that his heavy horsemen could play. Nonetheless, the Macedonian cavalrymen, like all horsemen of the ancient world, operated in the midst of great difficulties. Their mounts had no horseshoes, which meant that their use on hard terrain in particular and their endurance on any surface in general were quite limited. The riders themselves used primitive spurs and had no proper saddles, which were introduced only in the third and fourth centuries A.D.—a problem that compelled the rider to place most of his weight on the back, not on the flanks, of the horse, which greatly diminished his performance as a warrior. But the most important handicap was certainly the lack of stirrups, which were apparently introduced only in the sixth century A.D. The absence of stirrups implied little stability, forcing the horseman to use only the strength of his body to deliver attacks either by spear or by sword. Moreover, horses were expensive, hard to maintain, and a serious logistical problem because of the amount of food and water that they consumed.³⁷ Finally, even if all these problems were solved, there were added complications: Once on the battlefield, horses were hard to control and apparently of little use as shock units against determined, spear-armed infantrymen since the moment the rider decided to exchange spearpoints with the opposing footman, his horse and thus his security became vulnerable.

If all this implied that the horseman's role seemed to be confined to supporting other units, it did not necessarily mean that he was unimportant. Riders could be used for reconnaissance, although this was not one of the best practiced arts of ancient peoples; they could defend the flanks and rear of the line; they could even attack a disordered phalanx; and they were certainly deadly in pursuit. The greatness of the Macedonian innovation was, however, an extension of the roles of both infantry and cavalry.

The Macedonian solution to the problem was a combination of personal skill, improved weapons, and, most of all, cooperation between different army units. Unlike most Greeks, except the Thessalians and partially the Thebans, the Macedonians had always maintained the tradition of a strong cavalry. The highest level of military prestige within the Macedonian army belonged to members of the heavy cavalry, a role for which men of the upper level of Macedonian society must have prepared themselves since their youth. For instance, at the age of 14, the royal pages were already capable of serving as companions of the king during the hunt.³⁸ Although horsemanship played an important role in their upbringing, the Macedonians also adopted a type of spear that, at least against the Persians, seemed to have given them a great advantage: At the battle of the Granicus River,

"Alexander and his guards were getting the best of it [the fight], not only through their forcefulness and their discipline, but because they were fighting with stout cornel-wood lances against short javelins."³⁹ If there was a problem, it was that even the strong cornel-wood spear would break at first impact, as happened at the Granicus River ("In the mellay Alexander's lance was broken"⁴⁰). This compelled the rider either to call for a new spear, as Alexander did though initially without success (his royal aide Aretas "had also broken his lance"⁴¹), or to keep stabbing his opponent with what was left of the spear, as Aretas was doing, "putting up a brave fight with the half of his broken weapon."⁴² Another solution—probably the most common—was to drop the broken weapon and to use the slashing sword: When the Persian Spithridates was on the point of killing Alexander at the Granicus River, Cleitus, son of Dropides, "drove at Spithridates' shoulder with his cleaver and shore it off."⁴³

The cornel-wood spear does not explain, however, how the Macedonian heavy cavalry could fulfill a function—shock—that had been denied to other horsemen. The Thessalian heavy cavalry, for instance, also behaved splendidly at Issus ("with great slaughter [they] overthrew the barbarians"⁴⁴) and at Gaugamela ("[they] fought gloriously"⁴⁵), although fighting again in a more orthodox manner—using two spears, one thrown as javelin, the other used for stabbing.⁴⁶ Macedonian horsemanship cannot be an alternative explanation on the basis that their riding ability allowed the Macedonians to use two hands to handle the cornel-wood spear and still keep their balance on horseback. What can be explained by weapons, horsemanship, or good protective armor (which it seems they had) is only why the Macedonian cavalry was superior to a section of the Persian cavalry but little else. The problem in most cases was not to defeat the enemy horsemen alone but to bring their infantry at bay. It is here that the heavy infantry of the Macedonian army played its decisive role.

The formations that both the Macedonian and the Thessalian heavy cavalry assumed clearly convey the impression that the horsemen operated in an offensive role. At the battle of Gaugamela, the Greek allied light cavalry deployed in its normal rectangular formation, with a frontage of 16 men and a depth of 8, for a total of 128 horsemen.⁴⁷ It was clearly a deployment that was useful either for harassing enemy lines, with one rank after the other moving forward and then turning back after launching their javelins, or, more likely, for defending the flanks of a friendly unit. The story is quite different with both the Macedonians and the Thessalians. The Macedonian squadrons deployed in triangular formations, and the Thessalian squadrons aligned themselves in their customary rhomboid shape.⁴⁸ Both were shock formations—more clearly so in the case of the arrow-shaped Macedonians, a little less so with the diamond-shaped Thessalians, where shock and ease of maneuver at every corner of the rhombus were combined. Yet in spite of

the offensive capabilities of the formation, even Alexander's cavalry could not defeat an enemy infantry standing its ground with long spears protruding against the breasts of the horses and the bodies of their riders. It was here that the heavy infantry would enter the scene, operating in a number of ways but usually in close cooperation with their heavy cavalry. As will be shown later, the Macedonian phalangites could begin a clash with the opposing infantry, planning either to defeat them on their own or, if this proved to be difficult, to open the ranks of the enemy so that their cavalry could pierce the line and deliver the decisive blow either on the flanks or rear. They could also simply pin their enemy counterparts while the horsemen cut them to pieces again at flanks or rear. Of course, all this assumes that the Macedonian horsemen would dispose of the enemy cavalry, which was, as I will show, often the case. Otherwise, the infantry would have to play a delicate role in the timing of the attack—holding the footmen at bay while the enemy horsemen went down to defeat. Moreover, at the same time, the Macedonian lighter soldiers also would enter the action, either in support of their horsemen (as will be shown for the battle of the Granicus River) or to make sure that no threat came to the flanks of their line (as they did at Issus). It was a pattern repeated in a number of variations in the three major battles leading to the conquest of the Persian Empire.

The Ways of Alexander: Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela

When Alexander crossed the Hellespont, 32,000 footmen and about 5,100 cavalrymen accompanied him, but he had less than half his infantry at his first major battle at the "Asian Gates" on the shores of the Granicus River (Figure 5.2).⁴⁹ There, his force of 18,100 men faced the Persian army commanding the road to the satrapal cities of Sardis and Daskyleion and thus control of Asia Minor. Our most important source, Arrian, describes the Persian battle order as having 20,000 horsemen lined up on the opposing side of the river, backed up by another 20,000 Greek mercenary hoplites on the ground that gently rose fairly close to the river's edge.⁵⁰ A. M. Devine cuts these numbers drastically, assigning no more than 10,000 Persian horsemen and 5,000 to 6,000 footmen.⁵¹ Also, modern research seems to downplay the difficulty of the obstacle presented by the river. The Granicus is generally described as being wide but not deep, with banks that are fairly easy to navigate.⁵² The encounter, says Devine, was furious but short, and the casualties inflicted to the enemy were vastly inflated: "Granicus . . . was a relatively peripheral battle, involving comparatively small forces and, from the tactical point of view, simple and straightforward."⁵³ Devine's interpretation is enticing, yet to accept his battle order also means discarding

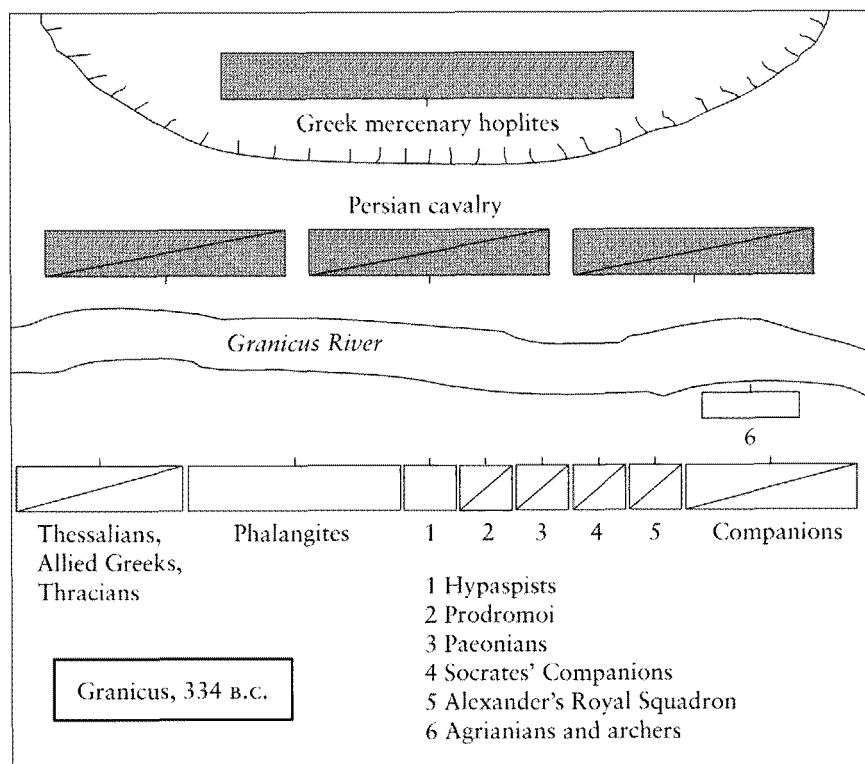


FIGURE 5.2

the figures from our most reliable source, Arrian. Moreover, even if we scale down the Persian numerical superiority, Alexander's task still seems to have been forbidding—to attack an enemy in a strong natural position. Moreover (and on this Devine would probably agree), Granicus was important because it was “the foundation stone of Alexander's own world-kingdom.”⁵⁴

The wise Greek mercenary leader Memnon had strongly discouraged the Persian satraps from taking a stand at the “Asian Gates.” The Macedonian infantry, he had argued, was superior to his own. Thus, it would be wise to avoid a pitched battle. Attrition would be the key to their success. Let us burn our crops, fodder, and towns behind us, he urged, and let Alexander advance into a scorched land with no means of sustenance in the long run.⁵⁵ It would have been a wise decision because, if we accept Plutarch's words, Alexander was already 200 talents in debt at this stage, the Macedonian army's coffers contained only 70 talents, and the existing provisions for the army could not last more than thirty days.⁵⁶ But the Persian generals who would have to sacrifice the lands under their own rule to follow Mem-

non's advice decided otherwise. The natural obstacle offered by the Granicus River would, they believed, give them victory.

The odds seemed to be with the Persians. In the end, however, this proved to be the only thing in their favor. They began with a faulty decision, they continued being outthought and outfought when the two armies came into direct contact, and they ended in bitter defeat. But it had not been easy for Alexander. For a moment, even his own life had been in immediate danger. At the outset, the problem had been how to meet the cavalymen lining up the opposite side of the river. Behind them on the ridge, in another line, the Greek mercenaries cut the distant horizon.⁵⁷

Yet the enemy's strange position—cavalry on the edge of the river with no infantry support and heavy infantry at the back without cavalry support—meant that Alexander's 18,100 men had to face only an almost equal number at the outset, if we accept Arrian, or even enjoyed numerical superiority, if we agree with Devine's thesis. Moreover, the odds in this case seemed to favor Alexander, who could combine cavalry, both light and heavy, with his best infantry and about 500 archers and 500 Agrianian javelinmen. The fact was that Alexander had his best troops with him at the Granicus—all of his Macedonian heavy infantry, all of the cavalry, and seemingly the elite of his light infantry, that is, the archers and Agrianians. Moreover, the opposing cavalry was probably deployed in the worst or the least imaginative way possible, like a line of infantry—it would be “a cavalry struggle, though on infantry lines.”⁵⁸ The reason for the faulty deployment might have been the need to give the Persian cavalry the pride of place, as Hans Delbrück argues.⁵⁹ Or, more likely, it may have been a lack of confidence in the Greek mercenary hoplites' ability to match the Macedonian phalangites on the basis of Memnon's advice or even as a way to show Memnon that the rulers of the empire, the Persians, could perform a better function than their Greek mercenaries. Of course, another more logical reason could have been the intention to subject the Macedonians crossing the river to an unanswerable shower of javelins—a function that the hoplites could certainly not perform. The correct solution even in this case, however, would have been to line up blocks of heavy infantry between the javelin-armed cavalry.

There were other problems worrying Alexander—how to cross the river in an unbroken line, where to strike, what procedure to adopt in the strike, how to acquire local superiority, and how to proceed once this goal had been reached. The first thing that Alexander was forced to do was to match the length of the enemy deployment. If we accept the traditional 20,000 men for the cavalry, this meant that his line was, in part, shallower than his enemy's, his cavalry at the wings 10 deep and his infantry in the center 8 deep.⁶⁰ The river's bottom and, in places, its current were obstacles to the uniformity of the Macedonian deployment. Alexander solved the problem

by advancing obliquely. It must have been a slow process, and as the Macedonians drew near to the opposite shore, they must have been the target of the unanswerable showers of Persian javelins. But Alexander's plan was not simply to reach the other side of the river with his soldiers closely packed and in as ordered a line as possible in the waters of the Granicus River.

The Macedonian right wing attacked the enemy left. There, the long spears of the Macedonian heavy horsemen, together with the missiles of the javelinmen and probably the archers (who had advanced with the horsemen), tortured the Persians with a deadly combination of weapons.⁶¹ But the decision of the battle would not come from the confrontation on the right wing. (We know little about the actions on the center left or left wing, especially if we consider unreliable Diodorus, who mentions a great effort on the part of the Thessalians.⁶²) The issue would be resolved at the center left of the enemy line, where Memnon, his son, and the Persian commanders stood.⁶³ It was here that the Macedonians first struck—with a unit of heavy infantry (probably the 3,000 hypaspists) and three units of cavalry, a squadron of Companion cavalry, 600 prodromoi, and the Paeonians.⁶⁴ According to Devine, this was a feint designed to draw the Persian cavalry off the river edge and thus open them up to a Macedonian counterattack.⁶⁵ The presence of the heavy infantry suggests, however, that Alexander hoped to pin the enemy center; then, in his subsequent attack, he would lead the Royal Squadron and inflict damage at the most vulnerable point of the line. Things did not work out quite that way, for the leading contingent of the Macedonian first strike could not hold its own and had to withdraw in disorder. But the struggle had still achieved something for Alexander, who struck quickly into the enemy line after rallying some members of the retreating first wave.⁶⁶ A desperate conflict ensued. For a moment, Alexander's own life was in danger: After defeating the cavalry that was lined up on the river's shore and already battered by the first Macedonian contingent, he was counterattacked by the son-in-law of King Darius, Mithridates, who rode at the head of a group of horsemen arranged in a wedge shape. In the end, here too Alexander survived by gaining control of the enemy center left.⁶⁷

The breakthrough came, according to Plutarch and Polyaeus, when the Macedonian phalanx crossed the river in support of the Macedonian horsemen.⁶⁸ The Persian cavalry broke and fled before their Greek mercenary hoplites, lined up on the ridge, could intervene. Now, the hoplites would have their turn. They tried to surrender, but Alexander gave them no quarter. They were traitors fighting against their own race in support of the Persian cause.⁶⁹ The Macedonian infantry advanced to pin the Greek mercenaries; the cavalry massacred them from the flanks and rear. Except for the few left for dead on the battlefield, Arrian says, only 2,000 of the 20,000 Greek mercenaries survived. Alexander sent them in chains to Greece to

hard labor.⁷⁰ Devine's more sober accounts of the enemy losses assigns 1,000 casualties to the Persian cavalry and probably 2,000 to 3,000 to the Greek mercenaries.⁷¹

The battle of the Granicus River (Figure 5.2) is a splendid example of the sophistication of the Macedonian army. Strategically, it showcased Alexander's ability to grasp the initiative and to deliver a killing punch. Tactically, if we agree with Devine, it was a superb display of a clever stratagem—the feint of the initial attack—to draw the enemy out of position.⁷² But the most crucial aspect of the encounter was the subtle combination of the roles played by the various units. The action on the right wing had been a clever combination of the Companion cavalry with the archers and the javelinmen. At the center, the first attempt to use heavy infantry and heavy and light cavalry together had apparently failed but not so much from lack of cooperation among the various arms as from the strength and bravery of the enemy. Yet the combined attack had still smoothed the way for the piercing blow on the part of Alexander and the Royal Squadron. Here, the role seems to have been reversed—the cavalry pinned the foe and the infantry delivered the decisive blow, if we accept Hammond's interpretation that the real breakthrough at the center came only when the phalangites crossed the river and caused the still fighting Persian cavalry to flee.⁷³ But even if we do not accept Hammond's view, the phalangites reappeared in a more customary role when they brought the Greek mercenaries to bay. They pinned their opponents while the cavalry destroyed them. This pattern of cooperation between the various army units was again the key of Alexander's approach at Issus, a year later, on the banks of the Pinarus River (Figure 5.3).

There is no doubt that the maneuvers of the Persian king Darius before the battle of Issus were clever. He cut Alexander from his supply base, captured and slaughtered his wounded and sick, and marched in an area in which Alexander's army had to face a much larger host.⁷⁴ However, he has been harshly criticized for his choice of the battlefield, which was clearly unsuited to the characteristics and numbers of his soldiers. C. L. Murison disagrees with this view, claiming that Darius's intention had been different and that he was compelled to fight where he had not intended. Darius wanted to cut the Macedonian army in two and defeat it in detail. He failed because of timing. In spite of this, his plan had been "extremely sound," and he could still teach much to Alexander "about the importance of sound strategy and thorough and careful reconnaissance."⁷⁵ Devine agrees on the effectiveness of Darius's strategic surprise, but he does not accept Murison's view that Darius intended to defeat the Macedonians in detail.⁷⁶

The Great King certainly outsmarted Alexander in the initial stages of the campaign of Issus, and it was only sheer determination against seemingly impossible odds that allowed Alexander to reverse the situation. Yet when the two armies met near the Pinarus River, now identified as the Payas

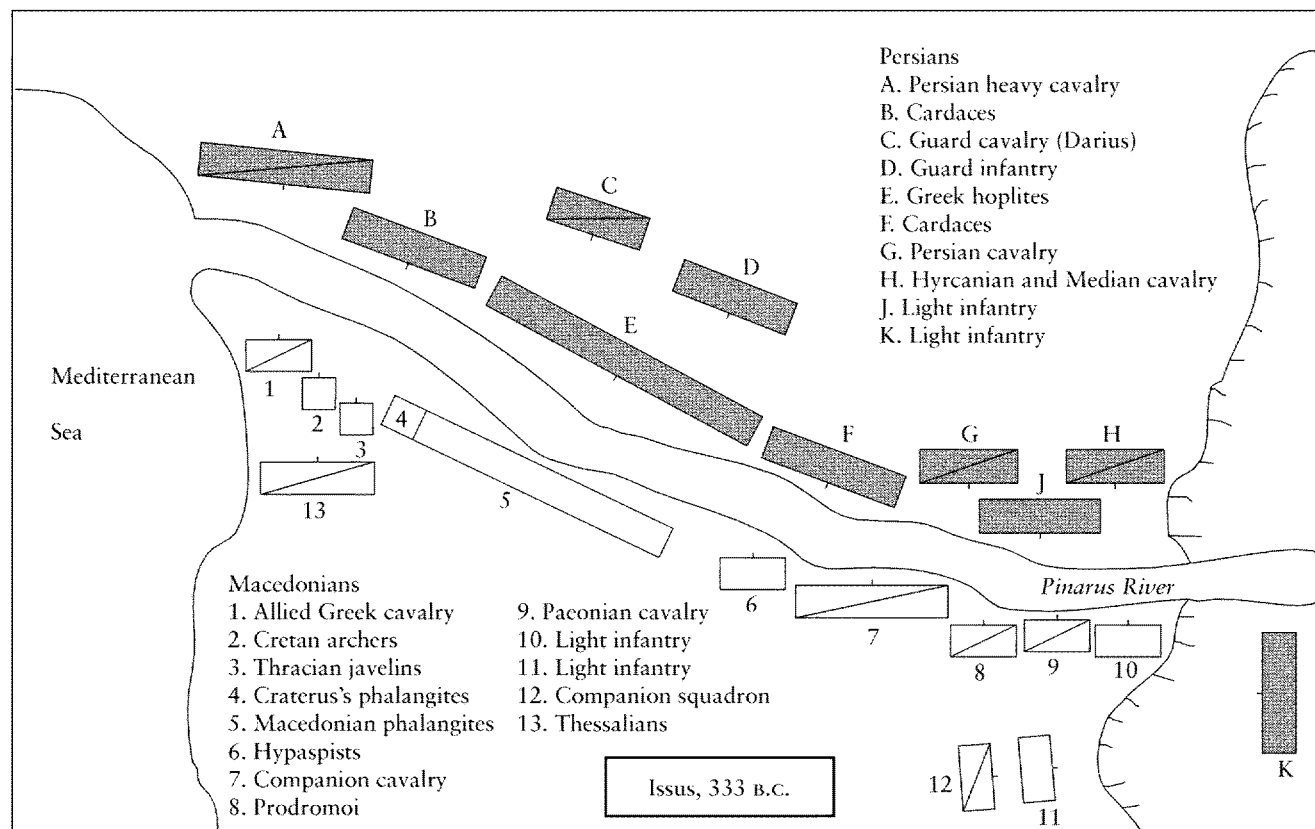


FIGURE 5.3

River,⁷⁷ Alexander's 5,300 cavalry and 26,000 infantry troops still faced a much larger enemy, although we must reject the 600,000 men that unspecified historians, Arrian says, attribute to the Persians.⁷⁸ Numbers, however, were not the real problem facing Alexander. The limited extent of the battlefield forced the Persians to deploy their men to "an unserviceable depth."⁷⁹ This deployment would diminish the odds against Alexander if the battle did not last long enough to allow the formation with greater depth to overcome a thinner line. The nature of the terrain did not appear to be a handicap for Alexander's forces. Actually, the presence of the Mediterranean Sea on the left allowed him to anchor his line to an unflankable spot. Also, the hills on his right eventually gave similar safety to his flank. Yet some problems developed in this direction before the battle because Darius had dispatched 20,000 light soldiers on the left. Although some of them would remain on that wing for the forthcoming battle, others had the task of climbing the hills and thus outflanking the Macedonian right wing.⁸⁰ It was a threat that Alexander had to meet before clashing with the enemy. After making rather elaborate preparations to meet the challenge,⁸¹ he finally let his Agrianian javelinmen and a few archers move against the enemy on the heights, easily dislodging the Persian light infantry from their outflanking position and forcing them to flee to the summit of the hills.⁸² But the main problem lay elsewhere. The waters of the Pinarus River seem to have presented no difficulty, but the banks, especially along the enemy center, were "in many places precipitous," and where "they appeared more accessible," they in fact had been made difficult to negotiate through the stockades built by the Persians.⁸³

Darius's plan relied on the ability of his Greek mercenary infantry, deployed in the center and supported on the left by the heavy Asian infantry of the Cardaces, to contain the Macedonian phalangites, who had to overcome not only the enemy spears but also the very difficult terrain. The Persian left was to harass the Macedonian right and, if the troops sent to the hills succeeded in outflanking their enemy, to envelop it. But the most important role was given to the Persian right, where the best cavalry was massed, its aim to roll the Macedonian left and, while the opposing centers were pinned, to attack the phalangites' flank or rear.

Alexander, who had been outscouted and outsmarted in the initial stages of the campaign, reversed the situation on the battlefield. He was able to deploy and then to reshuffle his line, relying mainly on the nature of the ground or the screening action of his other troops. When he saw that his left was in great danger, he kept the Companions with him but transferred the Thessalian cavalry on his left near the Greek allied horsemen and the Cretan archers and Thracian javelinmen. The Thessalians were instructed to deploy behind the front line.⁸⁴ Clearly, Alexander's intention was to use

his Greek cavalry on the left as a smokescreen to entice the Persian cavalry to attack and then counterattack the Persians in disorder.⁸⁵

The enemy left, where he would launch his main attack, presented problems for Alexander. The terrain, as the initial development of the battle would show, was unsuitable for a cavalry attack. Clearly, this had also been on Darius's mind. Instead of following the usual Persian pattern of attempting a double envelopment, the Great King had, in the end, concentrated most of his horsemen on the right, choosing envelopment on a single flank. The problem for Alexander was, however, that the Persian left still remained relatively stronger since it was lined up with the Cardaces (Arrian calls them "hoplites"⁸⁶) and various units of cavalry, supported by the rest of the 20,000 light infantrymen who had been sent toward the hills to outflank Alexander's right. Launching a cavalry attack on the Persian left would have been suicidal. The rocky course of the river allowed only careful, slow movement for men on horseback. All this would have taken place while they were an easy target for the light infantry. Finally, those horses who survived the crossing would have to face the spears of the Cardaces.⁸⁷

Nonetheless, Alexander's choices were limited. His center could still give him victory, and his left could complete a holding action and, with his Thesalians, deliver a nasty surprise, but his best option was still to attack where the enemy was weakest. And that was the Persian left. But first, he made sure that his right flank was secure. He posted two squadrons of Companions with a few javelinmen and Macedonian archers at a right angle facing the hills to contain any threat, in case the Persians who were on the summit decided to descend on the Macedonian line.⁸⁸ In front, he deployed his hypaspists, the rest of his Companion cavalry, and his light cavalry, prodromoi, and Paeonians. The rest of his Agrianians (the javelinmen) and archers took position at the extreme right. The hypaspists, led by Alexander on foot, charged on the double, both to surprise the Persians with the suddenness of their attack and "to receive the less harm from the Persian archers."⁸⁹ It was the beginning of an encounter that would soon develop into full-scale action, with the cavalry joining the fray after the infantry and likely with the Agrianians and Macedonian archers pummeling the Cardaces and Persian cavalry from the flank. It ended with the defeat of the Persian left and with the victorious Macedonians driving toward the center, where Darius stood.⁹⁰

The Macedonian breakthrough had come just at the right moment because the situation was growing increasingly difficult in the center. The phalangites had attacked the Greek mercenaries with great bravery, but the stubbornness of their opponents, the difficult terrain, and the presence of palisades rendered the Macedonian task very hard. Actually, at one point, due to the steepness of the banks, a gap opened in the Macedonians' own line. Although the historical source is not very clear here, it seems that the Persians'

Greek mercenaries counterattacked just where the gap appeared. The Macedonians fought back valiantly; after all, they were named “invincible.” Moreover, the great ethnic rivalry with the Greeks gave them an added incentive to fight as hard as possible.⁹¹ But the key moment in their favor came when the men on the Macedonian right, seeing their own center in difficulty, turned left and, “overlapping the now broken Persian left, by an oblique move, attacked and were in a thrice cutting down the [Greek] mercenaries.”⁹² It was a simple, most effective maneuver—the phalangites pinned the enemy footmen while the cavalry and possibly the hypaspists crushed them from flank and rear. It had been similar to this on the ridge at the battle of the Granicus River, but there, the move had been much easier than here on the bitterly bloodied banks of the Pinarus River near the Mediterranean Sea.

The situation on the left of the Macedonian line had also developed in the Macedonians’ favor. There is no reason to reject Devine’s interpretation of the action in this sector, even if we disagree with him that here, not on the right, was the Macedonian main strike. According to Devine, the Persian right, which included the heaviest cavalry, must have easily dispatched Alexander’s Greek allied cavalry but had been unable to turn on the Macedonian phalangites’ flank and rear. The Persians had found the Thessalian cavalry lying in wait—had not Alexander told them to deploy on the rear of the front line and thus to remain hidden from the enemy? The Thesalians, probably supported by the Cretan archers and the Thracian javelinmen, had engaged the Persians, now in disorder, and forced them to retreat after a harsh struggle and finally to abandon the battlefield once they realized that Darius had fled.⁹³

It was a great victory and brought a large booty to Alexander (money, women, and even Darius’s mother and wife⁹⁴), but the greatest prize of all, Darius himself, escaped in spite of a chase on the part of Alexander that lasted as long as daylight held.⁹⁵

There has been a tendency to rehabilitate Darius’s role at Issus. After the death of his best general, Memnon, a few months before the battle, Darius took personal direction of his armed forces. Certainly, he did well in the strategic approach to Issus, but Devine also argues that Darius should not be faulted for the disposition of his army. He had chosen a strong defensive position for his center, and he had conceived a concerted action of cavalry and infantry (especially the Greek mercenaries) to give him victory. He failed because his heavy cavalry on the right was taken in by the trap laid by the Greek allied horsemen and because the experience and the battle discipline of Alexander’s army foiled other aspects of his plan, such as the light infantry’s threat on the Macedonian right. “While Darius’ plan was sound,” says Devine, “his formations were lacking in battle-discipline and

experience of large-scale tactical manoeuvres, and so were unable to translate their king's projects into effective action."⁹⁶ Yet it seems to me that there was also a failure of leadership. As leader of his army, Darius should have realized that the structure of his host guaranteed the collapse of any elaborate plan. The shortcomings of the Persians in the Great Wars against Hellas could be seen at Issus too: too many units, too many ethnic groups, a confused chain of command, and a wrong deployment (it was too deep to be effective). Complex plans are often the culprits in battlefield disasters. Moreover, even if we revise our assessment of Darius's tactical skill, his leadership was still vastly inferior to Alexander's. Alexander led the first charge against the enemy; Darius positioned himself in the center in the traditional post of the Persian leader yet away from the thick of the battle. Alexander kept fighting at the head of his troops; Darius fled. But the victory at Issus was not only a matter of a great general against a mediocre leader. It was mainly the triumph of combined arms against troops used in isolation from each other. Each component of the Macedonian line was given a specific task—the light infantry to clear the threat from the right flanks; the hypaspists to lead the first charge against the enemy, soon backed by the cavalry and the light troops; the phalangites to break or at least to pin the enemy center; the cavalry on the left to delay as long as possible the enemy's main blow and then to entice the Persians into a trap. What is remarkable is that all this was established before the battle began, as Arrian implies;⁹⁷ Alexander, in the role of all ancient generals, did not remain on reserve to direct his troops but engaged in combat from the very beginning, preventing or at least hindering any change in plans. This smooth combination of the various arms reached its highest degree of sophistication two years later, in 331 B.C., at Gaugamela (Figure 5.4), the battle that decided the mastery of Asia.

The magnitude of the task that Alexander faced at Gaugamela grew with the passage of time.⁹⁸ About five hundred years later, in the second century A.D., the time when Arrian wrote, estimates of the number of Darius's forces on the treeless plain of Gaugamela had grown to 40,000 horsemen, 1 million footmen, 200 scythed chariots, and about 15 elephants.⁹⁹ In our time, more sober accounts have appeared. E. W. Marsden, for example, has cut these numbers drastically—arriving at 34,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry, to which, however, an undetermined number of other footmen, Uxians, Babylonians, Red Sea men, and Sitacenians must be added.¹⁰⁰ Devine calculates even fewer horsemen (about 25,000) and a few more infantrymen (50,000).¹⁰¹ If we accept Marsden, Alexander's forces would then have been either comparable to or even greater than Darius's—an assumption that the development of the battle does not justify. It is clear that the Persians vastly outnumbered the Macedonian host, which had, according to

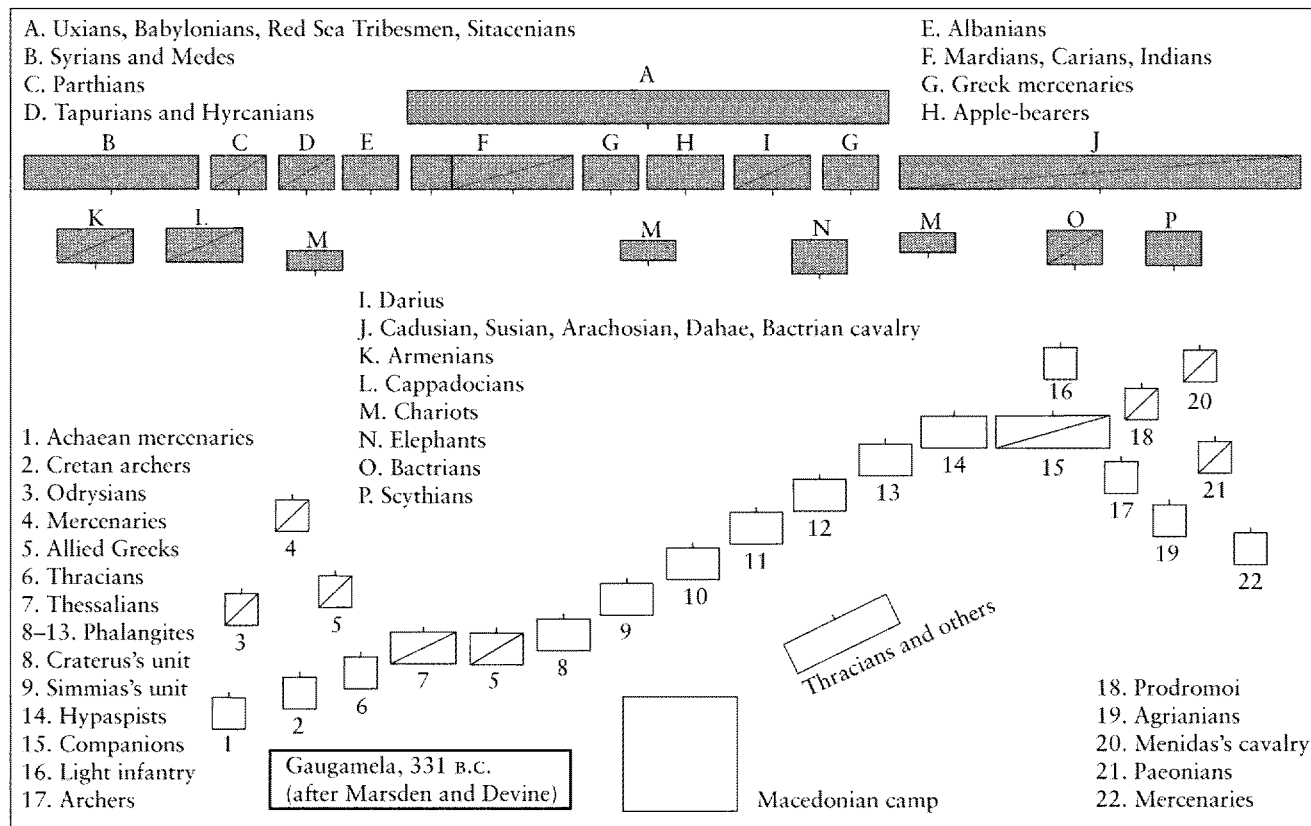


FIGURE 5.4

Arrian, 7,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry troops, numbers that are accepted by Devine¹⁰² and slightly revised by Marsden at about 7,250 horsemen and 43,700 footmen.¹⁰³

The Persian numerical superiority was certainly clear in cavalry, where they had an advantage of 5 to 1, if we follow Marsden, or 3.5 to 1, according to Devine. Some of the Persian horsemen, like the Scythians, "riders and horses alike, were better protected by defensive armour [than the Macedonians]." ¹⁰⁴ It is also apparent in Arrian's assessment, even when we discount his "million," that Darius enjoyed superiority in footmen. Here, however, it was a matter of large numbers trying to make up for poor quality. Except for the 2,000 Greek mercenaries and the 1,000 guardsmen (called apple-bearers because the shafts of their spears were fitted with golden apples¹⁰⁵), these men were clearly no match for the 12,000 Macedonian phalangites.

Darius's deployment showed that he was aware of this weakness. On the left wing, he lined up a vast array of cavalry. On the right, he deployed a formidable number of horsemen together with Syrians, Medes, and Albanian footmen.¹⁰⁶ His 3-line formation in the center had 15 elephants and 50 chariots in the first line. In the second line, moving from the right, Darius posted Mardian archers and Carian and Indian cavalymen, then a unit of Greek mercenaries, the Persian infantry guards called the apple-bearers, the king himself with his guard cavalry, and finally another unit of Greek mercenaries. The rest of the infantry, in deep formation, was deployed in the third line.¹⁰⁷ The Persian center was clearly in a defensive posture, for it would be facing Alexander's phalangites. Yet the presence of the cavalry and especially the deployment of the elephants and chariots in front suggest a certain offensive potential if we also take into consideration the role that Darius had in mind for his chariots and his assumptions about the Macedonians' limited choices of action.

Darius's plan, on the surface, was neither unreasonable nor simplistic. The disposition of the center negated the core of the power of Alexander's army on the field—his superiority in heavy infantry; the strong wings opened a great possibility of success for the usual Persian plan of double envelopment. If the Macedonians advanced with their footmen, they would have to go through the elephants and chariots of the first line and then face an array of cavalry, heavy infantry, and archers around the king. If the Macedonians attacked with their horsemen, they would confront a vastly superior host, outnumbering them 5 to 1. If they remained in a defensive posture, then the chariots and the encircling cavalry would have brought them to defeat. The problem for Darius, however, was that in the end, his plan was full of loopholes, not so much because his chariots came to an inglorious end but because he committed himself to a static posture that weakened his plan once he tried to adapt it to changing circumstances. He

allowed a skillful general like Alexander to retain the initiative at a key moment of the battle, so that the Macedonian could either reduce the odds against himself or achieve local superiority in spite of being outnumbered.

Alexander's deployment seemed to follow the usual pattern of cavalry at the wings, supported by light infantry, and heavy infantry at the center. Yet he introduced a number of novel sophistications into this arrangement. He adopted a deployment that Devine "loosely" describes as a "tactical square."¹⁰⁸ The Thracians constituted the rear of the square, their task being "to wheel around and receive the Persian attack" if they should see their front line surrounded by the enemy.¹⁰⁹ The two flanks were arranged in an unusual triangular deployment. The units there adopted an organization in echelon in three lines that had both a defensive and an attacking potential (see Figure 5.4). For instance, on the right, Menidas's mercenary cavalry constituted the first line, the Paeonian and the prodromoi horsemen made up the second, and the Agrianian javelinmen and archers formed the third line. Then partially on the outside, there was a flanking guard provided by the old mercenary infantry under Cleander. The interior line of this irregular triangular formation was protected by the strong Companion cavalry, screened on the front by a number of other light infantrymen, including more Agrianians and archers, and then the hypaspists next to them. This pattern was repeated on the left side of the "tactical square": cavalry on the first and second lines, javelins and archers after, and the Achaean mercenary infantry as a flanking guard.¹¹⁰ The internal line here was protected by the Thessalian and allied Greek horsemen, deployed on the left of the heavy infantry line. The two extreme phalangite units were led by Craterus and Simmias. It is clear that the heavy infantry at the ends of the phalangite line, the hypaspists on the right, and the brigades led by Simmias and Craterus on the left had to support the action of their cavalry at the wing.

Alexander must have realized that, in spite of the sophistication of his deployment, committing all his forces at the same time or remaining in a static, defensive posture was suicidal. However, his options were quite limited, for the moment at least. He decided to assume a defensive stance, but it was a decision fraught with surprises for Darius. First, Alexander gave orders to his army to advance straight toward the center of the Persian army and thus give the impression that his own recklessness would simplify Darius's task. At a certain moment, however, he veered to the right,¹¹¹ adopting the oblique formation that Epaminondas had used against the Spartans at Leuctra.

Alexander's change of direction endangered the Persian king's plan. He ordered his men on the left to extend their line too, so that they would still be able to encircle the Macedonians.¹¹² Yet the problem had not been solved. If Alexander's forces reached the broken terrain at the side, Darius's chariots, which needed a flat, unbroken surface, would have been useless. To prevent this, Darius ordered his troops on the left to advance and encir-

cle the Macedonian right, so that the Macedonians veering toward the broken ground could be halted. It is at this stage that the first contact of the battle took place, for Alexander ordered his mercenary cavalry under Menidas to advance and charge the Scythian cavalry, which had been riding parallel to the Greek right.¹¹³

The cavalry battle started badly for Alexander. Menidas was beaten back, and the Macedonian king was forced to order the *prodromoi* and the Paeonians to enter the fray. The Persians caused great casualties among the Greeks, but in the end, they were forced to flee.¹¹⁴ The pattern had been set for the rest of the battle. Alexander's move would force Darius into an offensive response that Alexander counterattacked immediately, gaining local tactical superiority.

Darius's order of encirclement was aimed at pinning the Macedonian army to the plain so that he could unleash his chariots. While his Scythians and Bactrians were going down to defeat, he did just that. The attack of the scythed chariots was a pathetic failure. It was here that the Agrianians who had been screening the Companion cavalry would play their assigned role. They first met the chariots with a shower of javelins at a distance; then, when the chariots were drawing nearer, the Agrianians "snatched at the reins, pulled down the drivers, and crowding round the horses cut them down."¹¹⁵ The few chariots that reached and passed through the Greek lines met a similar end. The phalangites smartly opened their ranks so that the chariots' blades caused them no harm, and then the men of the second line, helped by a few hypaspists, massacred the enemy on the spot.¹¹⁶

Darius's second attack also had failed, this time miserably, but the battle had not been decided yet. The Persian king still enjoyed numerical superiority. He could still win, he thought, if only he could encircle the Macedonian line. So his whole left extended itself and advanced again in an attempt to surround the enemy, prompting a quick response from Alexander. He sent the *prodromoi* under Aretes to meet the challenge, while he kept the rest of the Companion cavalry, backed by the hypaspists, under his command. It is at this point, Arrian says, that a gap opened in the Persian line because of the attack of the Macedonian horsemen or, more likely, because Darius might have overextended his line in an attempt to encircle the enemy. In any case, it was the moment for which Alexander had been waiting. He deployed his Companions in wedge formation and, followed by the hypaspists, promptly went through the gap and straight at Darius. For a moment, a harsh fight developed, but the Macedonian riders, supported by the hypaspists, again had the best of it. The crucial moment came when Darius, "nervous as he had been all along [and seeing] nothing but terrors all around,"¹¹⁷ fled.

The third attack also had opened with a forward movement of the Persians, met again by a Macedonian counterattack. But this time, it had been

a matter not only of checking the offensive posture of the enemy and then of counterattacking but also of going for the lethal punch once the possibility of striking at the king himself came. As at Issus, Alexander at Gaugamela had realized that the key to conquering both the battlefield and the empire was his apprehension of Darius. Yet even after Darius fled the battlefield (eventually his own bodyguard killed him), the Macedonian success was still fraught with dangers. In pushing forward, the Macedonian phalangites too had opened a gap in their line. It was through this gap that the Indian and Persian cavalymen filtered, but once through the line, they went for the Macedonian camp instead of turning right to take the phalanx on the flank and thus attack the Macedonian left wing, which was supported by the phalangites under Simmias and Craterus.¹¹⁸

The initial success of the Indians and Persians against the camp (after all, there were only a few Thracians and unarmed grooms there¹¹⁹) was soon checked. The second line of lighter troops, the Thracians, turned and slaughtered a great many of the enemy horsemen.¹²⁰ But the Macedonian left was still in great danger. Although the chronology of events is not clear, it seems that the Persian attack on the Macedonian left was initially successful, prompting the Macedonian commander Parmenio to issue a plea for help to Alexander. The clash certainly came after the beginning of the confrontation on the right because the Macedonians who had advanced in oblique formation had refused their left. Probably it took place while Alexander was in the last stage of his defeat of Darius, for Parmenio's message reached him while he was in pursuit of Darius—at least, this is what Arrian implies.¹²¹ Arrian's statement is unbelievable, unless we accept it either as an invention devised to avoid criticizing Alexander's pursuit of Darius while the battle was still in doubt or as meaning that Alexander was beginning a pursuit but not actually already on the heels of the fleeing Darius. If he had been in pursuit, how could a messenger, even on the best of horses, reach him in time to make him turn to Parmenio's support? According to Hammond, Alexander responded to the plea by stopping his pursuit and turning his Companions toward the endangered wing. Actually, he never arrived there, for some of the fleeing members of the Persian cavalry who met Alexander on their path engaged his Companions in the "fiercest cavalry engagement of the whole action," causing 60 casualties among the Companions.¹²² Then, when he was finally ready to come to blows with the Persian right, there was no need for his help anymore, for the Macedonian left, including the Thessalian cavalry, had put the enemy to flight there too.¹²³ When he saw this, Alexander turned his horse and, accompanied by the Companion cavalry, vainly tried to apprehend the fleeing Darius, who escaped in spite of a pursuit that lasted until the next day, after a brief night's rest, for a distance of 600 stades (about 108 kilometers).¹²⁴ According to Devine, Parmenio's plea for help was never received

by Alexander, who had already left the battlefield in pursuit of Darius. Parmenio was finally successful, thanks to the Thessalian cavalry's bravery. The 60 casualties suffered by the Companions took place when Alexander finally stopped his pursuit of Darius. They were the result of a clash with the retreating Persian horsemen during Alexander's journey back to the battlefield.¹²⁵

Alexander's victory was the result of a number of factors, but certainly one of the most important was his ability to integrate the various elements of his army and to ask them to perform what their tactical characteristics allowed them to do best—his heavy cavalry to act in a shock function, his light infantry to screen his valuable troops and do away with the scythed chariots or deal with any enemy breaking through the Macedonian line, and his heavy infantry to support the action of the cavalry. The decisive tactical moment of the battle occurred when the hypaspists fought side by side with the Companions in their action against the Persian left and then the center left. Darius had failed not so much because of faults in his plan but because he was unable to coordinate units of his army with any semblance of effectiveness.

The price paid by the Macedonians in human lives seems not to have been too high if we restrict our view to the three battles: 115 at Granicus (85 cavalrymen, 30 infantrymen), 452 at Issus (150 cavalrymen and 302 infantrymen), and 300 to 500 at Gaugamela (of these, at least 60 were Companion cavalrymen).¹²⁶ In sum, then, about 1,000 Macedonians died on these three battlefields. However, the situation looks different if seen from another angle. A. B. Bosworth argues that Alexander might have conquered the world but that he damaged his own country terribly. "For Macedonia proper the generation of Alexander was literally a dead generation." He took with him all the young Macedonian men of marriageable age, and most never returned: They either died or settled in foreign lands. Macedonia, the strongest country before the conquest of the Persian Empire, would never recover. It "was set on a path of decline that proved irreversible."¹²⁷ But if the damage to Macedonia lay mainly in the future, there was certainly an immediate and horrible destruction for the Persians. If we follow the ancient sources, such as Arrian, then we would have Persian losses of 1,000 cavalrymen and 18,000 infantrymen at Granicus, about 100,000 (including over 10,000 cavalry troops) at Issus, and about 300,000 at Gaugamela.¹²⁸ There is no reason to doubt that the losers' losses were disproportionate to the winners'. After all, most of the casualties happened during the rout, especially against the Macedonians, whose cavalry was known for its ruthless pursuit.¹²⁹ Arrian's figures are clearly fantasy, but even much more sober estimates (Devine's, for instance) count the casualties among Darius's men in the thousands: 1,000 Persian cavalrymen and

2,000 to 3,000 Greek mercenaries at Granicus, about 15,000 at Issus, and “a few thousands” at Gaugamela.¹³⁰

The Keys of Alexander's Success

Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela show a much more complex function for all units than the simple notion that the heavy infantry played a pinning role and the cavalry delivered a decisive blow. It is true that the heavy footman was no longer the undisputed king of the battlefield as in classical warfare, but to say that he was dispossessed by the heavy cavalryman is to stretch the argument to a degree unwarranted by the evidence. The heavy infantryman still remained a key to victory, only this time he had to share his glory with the cavalryman. This is the case in all three major battles of the conquest of the Persian Empire.

Granicus apparently was an engagement of horsemen in which infantrymen made an appearance only when the Persian cavalry had fled the battlefield. They did pin the Greek mercenary hoplites, allowing their own horsemen to destroy them, but by then, it could be argued, victory had already been won. Closer examination of the evidence, however, reveals a different picture. Hypaspists together with heavy and light cavalrymen delivered the first blow to the Persian center. They failed, but their failure was not total because Alexander and his Companions came right after them, gathering some of the fleeing hypaspists and cavalry in the process and redirecting them against the presumably wearied Persian center. In addition, it is also probable that the definitive crushing of the center came, if we follow Plutarch and Polyaeus, not only as a result of Alexander's harsh fighting but also because of the support that the heavy infantry gave to the cavalry.

Issus presents a similar story. On the banks of the Pinarus River, the leaders of the first attempt to break the enemy line were actually the hypaspists without cavalry support, led by Alexander himself on foot. But the main section of the phalanx at the center, it could be argued, played the limited role of pinning the enemy and waiting for the victorious right wing of cavalry and infantry to arrive for the decisive blow. Yet even at Issus, the main section of the phalanx seems to have been given a different aim initially—to crush the enemy center—to which their bitter head-to-head encounter testifies. If they failed, it was not because they had been told just to pin the enemy line but because a combination of difficult terrain and bitter resistance on the part of the Greek mercenary hoplites frustrated their efforts. Moreover, even if we stretch the evidence and argue that, regardless of the way the fight at the center went, the main goal was simply to pin the enemy, we would still be forced to distinguish between a section of the heavy infantry, the center, directed to fix the opponents, and another section, the hypaspists of the right wing, first

to spearhead the assault and then to join the attack against the enemy phalanx in the flank and rear, together with the cavalry.

At Gaugamela, the story is still more complex because we really are not sure about what the central part of Alexander's phalanx did; at best, we can assume that its bristling pikes immobilized the enemy center. Yet the function of the hypaspists on the right wing and of the brigades of Simmias and Craterus on the left suggests again that the heavy infantrymen played a complex and important role. Alexander's Companion cavalry, followed by the hypaspists, entered the gap in the Persian line, which eventually led to the collapse of Darius's army. It was thus a combination of the horseman and heavy footman alike that assured the victory for the Macedonians. Meanwhile, on the left wing, the presence of Craterus and Simmias must have contributed to the defense of their beleaguered cavalry and finally allowed or made more easy the Thessalian cavalry's counterattack.

The role of the heavy infantry in an army like Alexander's, which had an astonishing proportion of 1 cavalryman to 6 footmen, also explains why the heavy infantryman continued to perform a key function even after Alexander. Yet it is also true that the cavalry played an unprecedented role in the collapse of the enemy army. First of all, the totality of the Persian defeat at the Granicus River or Issus or Gaugamela would have been inconceivable without the presence of the horsemen. Nonetheless, the action of the mounted men should not be seen in isolation from the rest of the battlefield. Whether they carried a javelin like the Thessalians or the sarissa like the Companions and the prodromoi, ancient horsemen could not deliver a decisive blow to steady infantry. They could do so only if other arms supported them. If the heavy infantry was a key element of this function, the light infantry too was integrated in harmony with the action of the horsemen and the phalangites. At Granicus, for instance, archers and Agrianian javelinmen had supported the action on the right and rained their javelins and arrows on the Persian left when the Macedonian cavalry came to blows with the enemy. At Issus, the lighter infantrymen had taken care of the threat from the hill. They had operated together with the attacking hypaspists and cavalry on the right. And they had probably played a defensive-offensive role on the left, as suggested by the disposition of the Cretan archers and Thracian javelinmen next to the Greek allied horsemen and close to the Thessalians.¹³¹ At Gaugamela, they had been deployed in a complex arrangement on the right to screen the Companions in the earlier stages of the battle. Moreover, Alexander used the lighter soldiers in other specific functions to enhance the security of the rest of his men on the battlefield. Both at Issus and at Gaugamela, many of them, possibly peltasts, were deployed in a second line, not as a reserve waiting to relieve their front-line comrades but to prevent envelopment and to tap any break in the Macedonian line. Furthermore, Alexander usually assigned specific

functions to lighter soldiers, assignments in which their lightness of foot was essential, such as clearing the heights at Issus from the right of the Macedonian deployment or dealing with the scythed chariots at Gaugamela.

Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela all show that a wide gulf separated the flexible Macedonians from the powerful, ponderous army of the Greek city-states. But the main difference between hoplites and Macedonians was more than a matter of weapons, manpower, or tactics. Rather, it involved a different approach to the whole relationship between warfare and society. The inclusion of so many army types was impossible in the classical Greek states for the obvious reason that the military role of the individual was the other face of his social status. A reversal of this situation could be possible only in another type of environment—for instance, one in which the government was based on authoritarian principles (as in the ancient Near East or in a kingdom such as Macedonia, where autocratic rule followed the almost democratic election of the king) or in truly democratic societies (as in modern times). The truth is that no typical Greek state, not even the democratic ones, fulfilled any of these conditions because, at best, the Greek brand of democracy put a certain number of citizens at the same level but excluded another large part and restricted or eliminated the aristocratic element. The cavalry provides a good example. There were good and practical reasons for its minimal use in Greece—rocky terrain, cost of the mount, and problems with the upkeep (1 groom was needed for each horse against 1 servant for every 10 footmen, even in the Macedonian army¹³²). The main handicap was the polis's social structure. Only a few men could support the expenses connected with the cavalry—horses, equipment, grooms, and so on—which meant either that military service would be the privilege of a restricted group of people, such as an aristocracy, or limited to the richest men in the community. In the first case, this became increasingly impossible as the aristocracies tended to disappear in most Greek states. The aristocrats were either forced to flee or to integrate with the middling elements of their society. In the other case, singling out a group of citizens and eventually making them part of the most prestigious arm of the military forces would run contrary to a political ethic that tended to level people rather than sanctify certain groups of citizens over the rest and thus, in the long run, restore an aristocratic class. The solution was to leave the people who did not quite fit the values of the ruling middling class at the margin of the battlefield—the aristocratic members with their horses, when present, at the wings, the poor with their javelins in front, and only in the prologue of the battle.

The situation was different in Macedonia, where the tradition of the cavalry remained strong even in the bleak years of Macedonian independence during the Great Persian Wars. This was, in part, because of tradition and

the example that the Thessalians provided to their south and also because the Macedonians, a minority in their own state, could and did maintain the idea of a small elite on the top of the social pyramid. It was an idea that the presence of a king with fairly authoritarian powers tended to reinforce. Moreover, the fact that the Macedonians apparently were a minority in their own territories was another element that strengthened the gradation of status in which Macedonian horsemen were uppermost and Macedonian footmen ranked second. The revolution that Alexander and his father, Philip, brought in this regard was to extend service as cavalry Companions to individuals who were not Macedonians by birth.¹³³ But this does not come as a surprise, for two reasons: first, because the connection between social status and military role had been eroded, and second, because the inclusion of what was apparently only a few individuals could shake but not break the system. Finally, the reliance on relative outsiders such as the Thessalians or the allied Greeks must be seen from two perspectives. The Macedonian army was, in the first place, becoming increasingly more cosmopolitan and less and less dependent on the straightforward relationship of the classical Greek state. Furthermore, like a grandfather who can play with his grandchildren but can also send them home to their parents if he is tired of them or if they misbehave, the Macedonians could always “return” any non-Macedonian unit that they employed.

This situation is also paralleled in the inclusion of so many light infantry troops—about 30 percent of the footmen who crossed the Hellespont in the company of Alexander. To maintain large numbers of light infantrymen or to give them a meaningful role on the battlefield would have been very hard, if not impossible, in the classical Greek state. Among other reasons, uppermost must have been the fear of enlarging the structure on which the state had to rely for its strength, or, to put it differently, to weaken the position of the people who owned the state by including the poorer strata of the population. In the case of Macedonia, there is again a reversal of the situation because many light infantrymen were mercenaries and also because the post of citizen-soldier was initially reserved, as the Asian campaign shows, only to those members of the army who could claim Macedonian ancestry or who had been accepted among the horse or foot Companions and among the hypaspists.

All these elements tended to make Alexander’s army unbeatable, to use the term the phalangites liked in referring to themselves.¹³⁴ Yet the awesome power that the Macedonians were able to unleash against the Persian Empire is still not fully comprehensible if we minimize the key contributions that a new sense of logistics and leadership made to their military efficiency. Donald W. Engels has convincingly argued that, contrary to appearances, “supply was . . . the basis of Alexander’s strategy” and that Alexander’s strategic decisions could be charted by assessing “the climate,

human and physical geography, available methods of transport, and the agricultural calendar of a given region.”¹³⁵

Alexander inherited from his father an army organized to become the most mobile of its time by far. A crucial development was the reduction in the number of noncombatants following the army. Philip had compelled his soldiers to carry most of their equipment, he had eliminated wagons, and he had reduced the number of servants to 1 for every 10 infantrymen and 1 for each cavalryman.¹³⁶ If we apply the same proportions to the invasion army of 37,100 and if we exclude the people involved in other activities (such as physicians and members of the siege train), there were, then, 8,300 camp followers—less than a fourth of what would have been customary in previous Greek armies.¹³⁷ The reduction in the number of servants, wives, and children and the abolition of the slow-moving wagons radically increased the mobility of the Macedonian army. Nonetheless, Alexander's men could not march on regardless of other conditions. In fact, since fewer people and animals were involved in carrying food and water, greater attention had to be devoted to matters of supply, and the landscape of the Persian Empire dramatically heightened the urgency of these problems because the terrain was often arid and the soil unfruitful. Alexander usually adopted two solutions to these problems. Where possible, he made arrangements with the local officials so that they would look after his army's needs. If the region to be invaded was hostile to him, then he made sure that the invaded territories had to accede to his wishes by securing a number of hostages before advancing further. If neither of the two solutions were possible, he cautiously moved into enemy territory, remaining near rivers so that there would be no problem with his water supply. Moreover, before crossing into enemy land, he would reconnoiter the area and then send in a small striking force. At the same time, the rest of his army would also be divided into smaller units, each with a source of supply within a radius of 60 to 80 miles and never so far apart that the whole army could not be easily assembled if there were any danger of attack. Finally, he would never remain stationary for a long time if that would mean outstripping the local supplies, and he would not enter any area during a season in which there was a limited possibility of finding food; in most cases, this meant never before the winter harvest of wheat and barley.¹³⁸ This was a policy that Alexander followed strictly. The only time when he failed to adopt it (in crossing the Gedrosian desert), he paid dearly for his lack of caution.

Alexander's attention to logistics might help to explain the rationale behind some of his strategic decisions. Yet it does not give the whole story of the mastery that he exercised on the battlefield, for the remaining key element of his winning formula was his leadership.¹³⁹ Alexander had all the characteristics that, according to Clausewitz,¹⁴⁰ make a great general: high intelligence, physical and moral courage, coup d'oeil or intuition, and de-

termination or a blend of intelligence and moral courage. His actions both as a strategist and as a tactician demonstrated this to a high degree.

Alexander's approach to the conquest of the Persian Empire is a clear example of how his mind reduced difficult problems to their essentials. He and the people around him were able to rationalize his attack against the Persian Empire in terms that strengthened the war effort of his army while weakening the resistance of the enemy. He presented himself as the heir of a long tradition of Greek heroism by tying his name to the warriors against Troy or to gods like Zeus. The war against Darius became the platform for the revenge of the Greeks against the horrors of the Great Persian Wars of the fifth century. And in the process, it restated the "Greekness" of the avengers' sword, that is, of the Macedonians. The conquest of the enemy's empire was construed, on one hand, as annihilation of the ruling house; on the other, it was seen as the acquisition of a wealth that Alexander was more than willing to share with his followers.¹⁴¹

Like Jason of Pherae before him, the great Macedonian leader realized that the key to the conquest was "one person"—Darius. But it is certain that Alexander did not share the other part of Jason's assertion that "everybody there [in the Persian Empire] has trained himself to servitude rather than prowess."¹⁴² Alexander warned his soldiers that "they ought to spare their own property, and not destroy what they came to possess" because defeating the king meant making another people's empire their own.¹⁴³ J.F.C. Fuller interprets this statement as meaning both the total destruction of the enemy forces and the safeguarding and acquisition of their wealth.¹⁴⁴ Clearly, Alexander gave no quarter to his enemy, as demonstrated at Granicus, where he showed no pity for the Greek mercenaries, or at Tyre, where he had no mercy for the inhabitants, who had long thwarted his attempts at a short, successful siege. Yet the Greek mercenaries and the city of Tyre were particular cases, the first dictated by Alexander's contempt for people of his blood fighting for the Persians and the second a logical result of the way the ancients understood the punishment of a city under siege: If residents resisted too long, then the besiegers would show them no pity. In reality, it seems that Alexander's slaughter of the Persian forces was more a result of the vagaries of the actions on the battlefield than a deliberate policy. Those soldiers were, like the Persian gold, part of the treasure he had come to conquer and not to destroy. His aim at Issus and Gaugamela was Darius's person. Consequently, Alexander garnered all his might in his quest to kill him, sometimes even becoming distracted from other actions on the battlefield if it is true that, while his left wing was on the verge of crumbling at Gaugamela, he pursued Darius.

His careful, logistic approach to the conquest is another splendid strategic example of the brilliance of Alexander's mind. After Issus, for instance, he held his impulsive nature patiently in check because he realized that he

had to conquer the Phoenician coast to ensure the safety of his army before making the final plunge into the heart of the Persian Empire. Alexander on the battlefield showed two faces. Before the action began, he confronted the problem of battle with rational coldness (both Issus and Gaugamela are examples of this approach). The enemy was like a quarry that had to be lured into a trap before being destroyed. However, once the action had begun, Alexander became a man possessed by frenzy, as he was at Granicus.

There are no more splendid examples of Alexander's exercise of intelligence at the tactical level than his plans at Issus and Gaugamela, although historians have probably underrated Parmenio's contribution in both battles.¹⁴⁵ If the development of the battle of the Granicus River may be seen as the result of improvisation rather than deliberate planning, this interpretation could never apply to the other two major encounters. The deployment of the Macedonian troops and their function on the battlefield, especially that of the right wing in the other two battles, showed that Alexander had mastered not only the capabilities of his own units but also the weaknesses of the enemy; he could make his plan work, almost with the regularity and precision of a watch, in the midst of the confusion of the battlefield.

Like Clausewitz's ideal general, Alexander followed up his plan of battle with a virtually unshakable determination. At Granicus, for instance, Parmenio discouraged him from launching his attack, saying that "we cannot take an army across a river on a wide front" while "we can easily cross at dawn" when the enemy would not expect it.¹⁴⁶ Alexander hung on to his plan despite this seemingly sensible advice. It was again Parmenio who, at Gaugamela, urged Alexander to attack the Persians at night, for this would have given the Macedonians the best chance for victory against a more numerous enemy; Alexander "would . . . fall upon them [the Persians] unready and confused and more open to panic."¹⁴⁷ But here again, for a number of good reasons (such as the uncertainty of a fight in the dark),¹⁴⁸ Alexander stood firm in his decision to wait for morning to match strength with Darius.

It is always hard to remain determined, especially when other options are possible and, on the surface at least, rational. This did not mean that Alexander followed his script religiously once it had been set. He could never anticipate all the developments of the battlefield. For this, he had to rely on his coup d'oeil, which inevitably allowed him to choose the right moment to strike the decisive blow. The account of his major battles clearly points out his splendid timing in delivering the killing punch—whether he followed the first wave of attack at Granicus or decided that the moment had come to direct his threat against Darius himself at Issus or especially when he entered the gap in the Persian line at Gaugamela, aiming his thrust directly at Darius. The fact was that Alexander coupled his intelligence, determination, and coup d'oeil with an open display of physical and moral courage. He taught by example—and he was a splendid combination of

commander and warrior.¹⁴⁹ We know that more calculating and more coldly logical men, like Scipio Africanus, would carefully protect the safety of their person when near to the dangers of the action on the first line.¹⁵⁰ And before Alexander's time, Xenophon had suggested that a general had to be brave but not risk his life in the search for glory.¹⁵¹ Xenophon's sensible suggestion must have seemed an oddity in the ancient world, and, for his part, Scipio really represented the values of a different period. Alexander, in the manner of all generals of his time, had to take his position on the front line once he had his soldiers lined up and had given them their orders. What distinguished Alexander from the rest, however, was his wisdom in troop deployment and the élan with which he fulfilled his role as a warrior. He was there not only to fight but also to inspire. At Granicus, he risked his life when a Persian sword "smote him on the head," shearing off part of his helmet.¹⁵² At Issus, "once within [Persian] range, first Alexander's suite and himself too, in his post on the right wing, took the river at the double," clashing into the Persian line.¹⁵³ At Gaugamela, "the cavalry with Alexander, and Alexander himself, stoutly fell on the enemy."¹⁵⁴ But Alexander's greatest show of physical courage was his action against the Malians, "said to be the most warlike of all Indian people."¹⁵⁵ In the assault on one of their cities, he was the first to scale a ladder but then found himself with only a few men on the wall when the ladder was smashed. First, he crouched, trying to escape the arrows, then in a frenzy, he jumped among his enemies gathering at the foot of the wall, driving them away with his sword. At first, they fled but then returned, raining all kinds of blows on him and finally hitting him on the chest with an arrow. The impact was so great that Alexander fell to the ground and was saved only by the action of two Macedonians. But then he stood up again and kept fighting even when, struck by a club on the neck, he was forced to lean against the wall. Only the intervention of other Macedonians who had finally either climbed the walls or broken through a gate of the citadel saved his life.¹⁵⁶

Instances of moral courage are more difficult to assess, not because Alexander did not show it but because our modern values infringe on our understanding of the meaning of moral courage in antiquity. Certainly, however, there are a number of actions in which sound moral strength went hand in hand with long-term decisions: Alexander's refusal to share power with Darius after Issus;¹⁵⁷ his decision to go to the limits of the Persian Empire, both to conquer and to ensure that the borders of his dominion were safe; his refusal at times to accept the suggestions of his seniors, such as Parmenio's advice at Granicus and at Gaugamela; his introduction of some of his new subjects' customs, against the strong opposition of the Macedonians; or, finally, his work toward blending the conquering race with the conquered.¹⁵⁸

Religion, Warfare, and Political Power

A. B. Bosworth has launched a harsh attack in the last few years on Alexander's heritage. In his view, Alexander is neither J. G. Droysen's champion and propagandist of Greek culture nor W. W. Tarn's visionary figure fostering the brotherhood of mankind. He is, instead, the man who began the decline of Macedonia, a savage warrior, a destroyer of thousands of lives in pursuit of his dream of grandeur, and the founder of an ephemeral empire gone to ruin soon after his death.¹⁵⁹ Yet it would be hard to deny that Alexander's conquest was a turning point in the history of Western civilization. He introduced Hellenic culture to western Asia on a large scale. He represented a shift from parochial to international concerns on the part of Greek culture. And he accelerated the process of disintegration of the polis in favor of larger entities. But Alexander's most enduring contribution was probably in the area of myth-making and in the relationship between religion and a certain type of rule in the West.

Like his father, Philip, Alexander was keenly aware of the value of pageantry as a key to public recognition and political power. At Babylon, for instance, in 323 B.C., representatives of the Greek states came to honor him with gold crown after gold crown, which he himself had requested.¹⁶⁰ Such a demand cannot be regarded as unusual in the context of Macedonian kingship, for the king, although chosen by the assembly of Macedonians from members of the royal house, combined very extensive powers in his own hands. He was the absolute ruler in secular matters, the sole arbiter in foreign policy, and the owner of all major resources, and the government was embodied in his person. But he also performed religious functions in the absence of a professional priesthood in the kingdom.¹⁶¹ His role as high priest would have conditioned Alexander to appreciate the value of symbolism. Consequently, it is no surprise that he was the hero who claimed ancestry from Heracles and Achilles; who tried consciously to follow in the footsteps of his great ancestors; who competed with the past as he tried to surpass and not just emulate the mythical heroes; who kept Homer's *Iliad* with him; and who, when asked why he was sad while visiting the tomb of Achilles at Troy, answered that, unlike Achilles, he had no Homer to sing his deeds.¹⁶² Alexander was also a man who interpreted his struggle with Darius not as the attempt of a powerful man trying to trample down and acquire the riches of another potentate but as the righting of old wrongs. It was revenge against the ancient invasions and thus a mission sacred both to Macedonians and to the rest of the Greeks who had suffered so much in the Great Wars.¹⁶³ Yet what distinguished Alexander most of all was his attempt to introduce values unknown to the West. His plan was not so much to Hellenize the East as to strengthen the power of the king by incorporating eastern elements.¹⁶⁴

Alexander's plan of action revolved around two main goals. On one hand, he requested honors that, although common in the East, the Greeks

reserved exclusively for gods, and on the other hand, he wanted to be recognized as a living god.¹⁶⁵ The main external characteristic of the first request was *proskynesis*, or obeisance. The Persians kissed equals on their lips as a form of greeting, gave those who were slightly their superiors a kiss on the cheek, and prostrated themselves and probably kissed the ground or blew a kiss to their superiors, especially the king. This gesture, which the Greeks called *proskynesis*, was, however, considered “comic, humiliating, and blasphemous” by the Greeks, for it involved a gesture that the Greek world reserved only for their gods. Addressed to another human being, it was a gesture associated with the servile people that they had just conquered, certainly not with Greeks themselves.¹⁶⁶

It seems that Alexander's request that his men adopt the practice of *proskynesis* like his Persian subjects was initially resisted harshly and in the end defeated, around 327 B.C.¹⁶⁷ Yet this was only the first stage. Although there are a number of controversial aspects to the story,¹⁶⁸ the basic point seems to be incontrovertible, that is, that a concerted drive toward bestowing the attributes of a living god on Alexander continued later. It was an issue that created all kinds of problems and ambiguities within the Greek world. There had been humans elevated to the status of gods as a testimonial of their great deeds, such as Alexander's own ancestor, Heracles. Apparently, there had also been instances of men worshipped as gods during their lifetimes, probably including the Spartan Lysander.¹⁶⁹ But especially in the latter case, even if we accept its authenticity, such instances were distinct exceptions to the rule that a human being, while among other people, should never be elevated to the status of god. The cult involved, among other things, a number of practical complexities. One had to build a temple with a statue of the newly crowned god in it. People had to offer sacrifices to the statue, establish games in the god's honor, and sing a paean in which the living man was associated with the other gods.¹⁷⁰ Yet when the drive toward deification came to its logical conclusion around 324 B.C.,¹⁷¹ the process had been in the offing for a long time.

The king of the Macedonians was not only the high priest of his state but also a man who claimed origins from a hero like Achilles and a god like Heracles. In the case of Alexander, other factors complicated matters. He was never really sure that Philip was his natural father, for his mother, Olympias, seems to have nurtured in him the belief that his real father was Zeus himself.¹⁷² It was a belief strengthened by his own career and by the writers at his court. A critical stage had been his conquest of Egypt, which had made him the pharaoh, king, and god at the same time, “incarnation and son of Ra and Osiris . . . Horus the Golden One, the mighty prince, beloved of Amun, King of Upper and Lower Egypt.”¹⁷³ His visit to the temple of Siwah in Egypt had only strengthened this belief. After his crowning as a pharaoh, Alexander decided to consult the oracle at Siwah in the midst

of the desert. It had been a perilous journey, during which he and his escort lost their way and almost disappeared in the midst of the sands. Finally, they were saved by following a flock of birds that directed them to the oasis where the temple stood. Alexander never confessed to anyone what transpired at Siwah, but, as he wrote his mother Olympias, "he had been told what his heart desired."¹⁷⁴ Yet even if we cannot be sure whether this meant that the priests at Siwah told him he was the son of Zeus, the outcome of the visit was that his courtiers, especially his official historian Callisthenes, were then able to spread the story that Alexander was indeed the son of Zeus.¹⁷⁵ Although important because the notion of Alexander's divinity could now easily circulate in public, the confirmation of his relation to Zeus had not made Alexander a god himself.¹⁷⁶ The final element that was still needed was his conquest of the whole Persian Empire.

Persian kings did not claim to be living gods like the pharaohs, but practices like proskynesis strengthened and restated the divine character of their rule. Although Greek gods could be seen as extensions of human characteristics, the gods of Assyria and now of Persia added elements that clearly removed them from the company of humans. It was this new interpretation of the divinity that Alexander was after. At banquets, people saw him dress in the purple robe of the god Amon, the Egyptian counterpart of Zeus. At times, he dressed in the attire of Hermes and Artemis. A coin would show him with the ram's horn, another divine symbol. The great artist Apelles would depict him with Zeus's thunderbolt in his hand, a portrayal repeated on the Babylonian coins that he himself approved.¹⁷⁷

Alexander's claim or the claim that others made for him around 324 B.C. was not just a way to embellish his personality or an expression of megalomania; it was also a way to strengthen and legitimize political power.¹⁷⁸ The deification of Alexander, writes E. Badian, "marks an epoch: the beginning of centuries of ruler cult that only came to an end with the total victory of a monotheist religion."¹⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, though acceptance of the deification went rather smoothly in the East (the notion of absolute monarchy fitted within the preexisting political structure), it found much stronger opposition in the West.¹⁸⁰ There, too, however, it is interesting to notice that the Companion horsemen as shareholders of political power were prone to accept Alexander's deification more easily than the humbler Companion footmen.¹⁸¹ It is also not surprising that the myth that the king was a living god, begun during Alexander's lifetime and probably consciously fostered by him, continued and prospered among his Successors, especially under the Ptolemies, the Egyptian dynasty. It not only removed the ruler, being an absolute king, from the scrutiny of his subjects but also advanced the idea that military victory gave the conquerors full power over the conquered and the right to divine status.¹⁸² It was the beginning of a trend that found a host of imitators among many other warriors, from a

number of Roman leaders of the republican and later imperial periods to the mythology surrounding Napoleon and, closer to our own time, Charles De Gaulle.¹⁸³

When the Macedonian peasant is asked today, “*Pu ine o Megalèxandros*” (Where is the Great Alexander?), and he answers, “*O Megalèxandros zi ke vasilèvi*” (The Great Alexander lives and reigns),¹⁸⁴ he is just restating in a simple way the notion that, although Alexander as a military leader disappeared in the later part of the fourth century B.C., he left a heritage of ideas and symbols that the conquerors of the future would use and manipulate for centuries to come. First among these new conquerors would be the Romans.

Chapter Six

A Phalanx with Joints

The Romans and the Heirs of Alexander

Nothing can withstand the charge of the [Macedonian] phalanx as long as it preserves its characteristic function and force. What then is the reason of the Roman success, and what is it that defeats the purpose of those who used the phalanx? It is because in war the time and place of action is uncertain and the phalanx has only one time and one place in which it can perform its peculiar service.

—Polybius XVIII.30.11, 31.1–2

Warfare After Alexander

The eastern winds had hardly erased Alexander the Great's footsteps from the sands of the Near East when his generals fell to quarreling among themselves. Soon, his vast empire would be divided five ways, with the Seleucids in the East and the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt emerging as the most powerful. Alexander's Successors fell prey to the old Greek habit of fighting each other more than the enemy threatening their borders. Especially in the northern parts of their kingdoms, new invaders loomed on the horizon in the shape of the wild Galatians, their limed hair sticking out like a porcupine coat. It was, however, more the threat coming from people of their own ancestry than the fury of the Celtic tribes that compelled the newly crowned Hellenistic dynasties to experiment with new forms in the management of war.

The number of original warrior-conquerors, barely adequate under Alexander, dwindled when the force was split between the various kingdoms, and although the number of Macedonians held steady overall, the

number of Greeks did not.¹ The problem was partially solved by the permanent or at times ad hoc inclusion of natives in the armies, such as the Egyptian units that Ptolemy used against Seleucus at the battle of Raphia in 216 B.C.² Just before Alexander's death, Arrian describes a phalanx of 6,700 Macedonians and 20,000 Persians, each file composed of 4 Macedonians and 12 Persians.³ A more common solution was to resort to mercenaries, who now became the norm.⁴ The Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt also pioneered another system that the West would adopt in a revised form centuries later in the Middle Ages. Professional warriors, called *cleruchs*, were granted pieces of land with the understanding that they would perform military service at their king's request. Initially, land titles would revert to the ruler once the soldier died, but eventually, they became hereditary.⁵

This "mixed" use of Macedonians, Greeks, natives, and cash- or land-based mercenaries allowed the Hellenistic monarchs to raise armies whose numbers would have been unthinkable among the city-states of Greece and in the Macedonian kingdom of Philip II. At Raphia, for instance, the Seleucids deployed 62,000 footmen and 6,000 horsemen, and at Magnesia, they had 60,000 and 12,000, respectively.⁶ The use of so many outsiders completed the disintegration of the original ties between civic and military life. War became the business of kings, not of the people.⁷ This is not to say that the king deployed his armies for the benefit of rich and poor alike—on the contrary, war remained a benefit of the well-to-do, directly or indirectly. But now the king became the sole repository of the main decisions and rewards of organized violence. The most treasured value of the Hellenistic monarch allegedly was to keep peace within his domain. In reality, however, his quest for tranquillity easily assumed a warlike guise, for he felt that internal peace could be achieved only through external conquest. The need was dictated by the demands of establishing one's own authority⁸ more than by any schizophrenic tendency.

The experience of the Romans in their various confrontations with the Hellenistic kingdoms, such as the Macedonians at Cynoscephalae or the Seleucids at Magnesia, shows clearly that there was enough diversity in the business of waging war among the various Hellenistic kingdoms. Yet on the whole, the phalanx of heavy soldiers fighting with pikes remained the core of the armies of the Successors. The cavalry, as under Alexander, continued to play an important role but never fully developed along the lines suggested by Alexander's campaigns. The experience with the East prompted the generals to adopt more heavily armed riders, while it is probable that contacts with southern Italy resulted in the horsemen carrying small round shields as well. The Galatian influence was mainly felt through the adoption of an oval-shaped shield by some foot units, while the Persians and Indians left their mark by introducing elephants among the weapons of war.⁹ Overall, however, no crucial changes took place either in weapons or in the

actual conduct of war on the battlefield. The Hellenistic kingdoms showed instead more creativity in sieges and naval warfare.¹⁰ One could correctly say that the art of warfare, as long as we remain within the sphere of the Greek-speaking Hellenistic kings, did not advance after Alexander the Great. We have to move elsewhere to a somewhat different heir of the Macedonian, the Carthaginian Hannibal, to see the direction in which an Alexander-type army could logically develop.

The Roman Military System

The primacy of the Hellenistic kingdoms within the Mediterranean lasted a long time. For instance, Ptolemaic Egypt did not fall under Roman control until the second half of the first century B.C. Yet it was clear within a century of the establishment of the Hellenistic kingdoms that mastery of the business of waging war had moved elsewhere and that the eventual overlords of the Mediterranean would come from the western part, either from Rome or Carthage. This would also mean confrontation with a different system of understanding and waging war and eventually the end of the hegemony of Greek arms and men within the Mediterranean.

The Roman military system, even on the eve of the Second Punic War, seems to have been in the mainstream of the type of warfare that had characterized the Mediterranean for centuries. The similarities with the Greeks are striking. The core of the armies in both Rome and Greece was the heavily armed footman, and, as in Greece, the military function of the soldier remained an extension of his social function. In Rome too, service was the right and the duty of the property owner. On the eve of the Punic Wars, only those people with a worth of at least 11,000 *asses* (circular Roman coins made of bronze) were usually called up to arms.¹¹ Moreover, wealth dictated the type of equipment that the soldier was required to carry and thus his function on the battlefield. Of the five classes that manned the Roman armies of the Republican period before the Second Punic War, the three highest in wealth wore heavy armor, and the remaining two fought in light armor.¹² This did not necessarily imply that other members of Roman society were excluded from the call to arms. Between the ages of 17 and 46, Roman citizens were obliged to serve 16 campaigns as soldiers. If need arose, the upper age limit could be extended to 60. Although normally this applied only to members of the five census classes, the Romans had recourse to a *levée en masse* (*tumultus*) in times of emergency, during which all the city's men could be required to serve as soldiers.¹³ There was a time during the Second Punic War when even slaves were recruited.¹⁴

The lure of riches, which Alexander the Great told his followers would be theirs if they conquered the Persian Empire, also loomed large among the Roman motives for waging war.¹⁵ As W. V. Harris writes, plundering

was "a normal part of Roman warfare."¹⁶ Between 297 and 293 B.C., at a time when the Roman population numbered about 200,000 adult males, the Romans enslaved 60,000 people from the conquered Samnites.¹⁷ Rome, which at the end of the fifth century B.C. ruled over 948 square kilometers, had expropriated land totaling about 9,000 square kilometers by the eve of the Second Punic War.¹⁸

Originally, the civic connections, the forms of recruitment, and even the reasons for waging war did not make Roman war dissimilar from that of an ancient Greek state; yet with the passage of time, the Roman military system tended to assume quite different characteristics. In Greece, the army eventually became a combination of citizens and mercenaries; in Rome, the army kept its national characteristics. It remained, in other words, a citizen army, half Roman and half allied. The tendency was not toward the integration of outsiders but eventually, during the second and finally the first century B.C., toward professionalization.¹⁹ In Greece, except for the mercenaries, the citizen remained an amateur soldier who fought when his state required it and then went home when peace was struck or victory achieved. In the various Hellenistic kingdoms, there was also a tendency toward professionalization of the army, as with the *cleruchs* in Egypt, but it was quite different from what developed in Rome, for it was a professionalization based on inheritance more than on deliberate choice of the individual at a certain stage of his life. In Rome, the citizen eventually tended instead to become a professional, and this was both because war was a permanent feature of everybody's life and because of the pauperization of many small landowners by the end of the second century B.C. This led to an increasing tendency toward the abolition of the census qualification and thus the opening of army service to all citizens, regardless of their wealth. For most, a career in the army was probably the only alternative to poverty.²⁰ The needs of an expanding imperial power also resulted in the citizen-soldier inevitably serving more than one campaign. During the period of the Second Punic War, a time of great peril, a stint of 16 or 20 campaigns was not unusual for footmen, while cavalrymen could serve for 10 campaigns.²¹

Thus, longer terms must have been a good economic incentive for people at the bottom of the social scale, and they also must have served well the interests and values of the upper levels of Roman society. This meant that "at Rome, as elsewhere, the comfortably well off and the old were largely responsible for sending the poor and the young into battle."²² In fairness to the ruling class and the fathers of Roman society, it was not just a conspiracy that sent the poor and the young to battle but also a deep commitment to what they regarded as the beneficial effects of warfare. As already mentioned, greed, as elsewhere in the ancient world, played an important role in the motivation for war among the Romans, but it would be to overlook a crucial aspect of the Roman psyche to dismiss their warmongering qualities

only in terms of acquisition of slaves, land, or gold. Service in the army was a necessary stage for any aristocrat interested in a political career. Something like ten years in the military were required for a person to aim at the top of the political structure.²³ Moreover, war represented the highest and most perfect fulfillment of the key values of the community. It was in war that a citizen could display his *virtus*, or manly courage. It was in the bloody confrontations with the enemies of the state that he could stake a claim for *gloria* and *laus*—achievements that, once gained, became the common heritage of the family for generations and distinguished the aristocrat from the rest.²⁴ Finally, war was the most perfect arena in which the Roman soldier, poor and rich alike, could give vent to his *bía*, as Polybius says, that is, his desire to use violent force without provoking fear but instead obtaining praise from his community.²⁵ When he took the besieged Nova Carthago in 209 B.C., Scipio Africanus instructed his soldiers “to kill everyone they met and to spare no one, and not to start looting until they received the order.” In captured cities, they sliced dogs in two.²⁶ Scipio Aemilianus cut off the hands of 400 Spanish youths to punish the citizens of Lusia for their rebellion in the second century B.C.²⁷ Even the war-hardened Macedonians of 199 B.C. became frightened at the outset of a battle against the Romans when they saw the mutilations carried out by Romans wielding the *gladius* (sword) against other Macedonians during a previous engagement.²⁸

The Macedonian fright of 199 B.C. brings out another major difference between Roman and Greek and Macedonian warfare. The sword, not the spear, was the most important weapon of the Roman soldier. The *gladius* was a short, double-edged sword, carried on the right. It could be used not only to cut but also to thrust—a function that made it a most deadly implement of war. For the Roman spear or *pilum* was not used for thrusting like the Greek spear or the Macedonian pike. In reality, the *pilum* was a heavy javelin more than a spear, thrown just before the Roman soldier attacked at close quarters with his *gladius*. The shield (*scutum*) too was quite different from the Greek or Macedonian shield. Its shape was oval, not round. Moreover, the handle of the *scutum* did not compel the wearer, as in the case of the hoplite’s shield, to assume a rigid position—excellent as a form of protection but less effective in attack. The *scutum*’s relative maneuverability and probably its strong boss made it also an instrument of aggression, while its size (apparently 1 meter long in the third century B.C.) gave good protection to the user.²⁹

The emphasis on the sword, a spear thrown like a javelin, and a large shield for attack, not just for defense, suggests that the Roman deployment too must have been not just another long, shallow line in imitation of Greek and Macedonian warfare. By the Second Punic War, the Roman legion numbered about 4,500 men (4,800 in the case of the allied legion, for they provided double the number of horsemen). Three hundred of them

were horsemen, and the rest were all foot soldiers, divided into four groups, each with specific functions.³⁰ One of these groups, the *velites*, provided the skirmishing screen for the rest. They numbered about 1,200, armed with round shields three feet in diameter, swords, javelins, and plain helmets, often covered with wolf's skin.³¹ The first line of heavily armed troops, the *hastati*, also numbered 1,200 men.³² Their shield was the oval scutum, made of two layers of wood held together by bull's-hide glue and covered first with canvas and then with calfskin, with the top and bottom edges protected by an iron rim and an iron boss in the center.³³ Apparently, it was a very heavy shield of about 10 kilograms, according to a modern reconstruction, and thus about 3 kilograms heavier than a typical hoplite shield.³⁴ It measured, says Polybius, 2.5 feet in width and 4 in length.³⁵ In addition, says Polybius, the *hastati* also carried body protection in the form of greaves, plumed helmets, and breastplates. Their weapons included the already mentioned Spanish sword or gladius on the right, which could deal an effective blow with either edge since the blade was "very strong" and "firm," and two *pila*, one heavier than the other, with the slender pilum probably thrown from a greater distance than the thicker one.³⁶

The attire of the *hastati*, who included the youngest of the heavily armed footmen, was the prototype for the other two types of heavy infantry—the *principes* (also 1,200 in number), who were the senior in age to the *hastati*, and the *triarii* (600 men), the veterans. The only difference lay in the fact that the *triarii* carried a long thrusting spear (*hasta*) instead of the pilum.³⁷ The *hasta* of the *triarii* and the name of the *hastati* suggest that probably the whole Roman army initially carried and fought with weapons in a manner similar to that of the Greek phalanx but that over time the Romans developed along different lines. They had dropped the round shields (*clipei*) in favor of the scutum,³⁸ and all but the *triarii* had exchanged the long thrusting *hasta* for the heavy pilum.

Each line of the legion's heavy footmen was divided into 20 centuries (60 men each for *hastati* and *principes* and 30 each for *triarii*). But the century was just the leftover of an older system by the eve of the Second Punic War. The smallest tactical unit seems by then to have been the manipule (2 centuries and thus 120 men for the *hastati* and *principes* and 60 for the *triarii*), which meant that each of the lines of heavy soldiers was divided into 10 maniples.³⁹

Alexander's complex linear arrangement on the right wing at Issus and on both wings at Gaugamela had been the exception, for Greek, Macedonian, and Hellenistic warfare remained wedded to the concept of the single line, stretched as far as possible, even in detriment to its depth, in order to match the length of the enemy line. Probably this also suggests that the pitched battle was understood as a continuous process to be resolved in the briefest time possible.⁴⁰ The Romans thought otherwise. They deployed

their heavy soldiers in three lines, the hastati in the first, followed by the principes in the second, and the triarii in the third. Initially, the lines were also set in a checkerboard fashion, each unit (maniple) separated from the maniple next to it by a gap, while the second line (for instance, the principes in relation to the hastati and the triarii in relation to the principes) would also deploy in a similar manner, each maniple at a certain distance from the other, plugging the gaps of the preceding line.⁴¹ The reason for this deployment might well have been to allow the velites to withdraw more easily after the opening skirmish and later to simplify both the heavy infantry lines' withdrawal or advance in their turn on the front line. It is also logical, however, that at the moment of hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, every line would have assumed a uniform front without gaps.

The deployment of the maniples in an independent fashion, yet dynamically related both to their line and to the line that supported them, must have given the Romans a mobility unknown to the Greek phalanx. The strength of the phalangites was in their close ranks and uniform line. These requirements, which made them the masters on many occasions, also made them slaves in others where the terrain was unsuitable or did not allow the keeping of straight ranks. For the Roman soldier too, a uniform line must have been ideal, but since his main weapon was the sword and since his basic tactical unit was rather small (120 men or even 60 in the case of the triarii), he must have had liberties that the phalangite could take only by putting his own and other people's lives in danger. The Romans, as Hans Delbrück writes, had adopted a phalanx, that is, a long thin line, with "joints."⁴² In other words, the heavy footman had retained his formidable stance both in attack and in defense, but in addition, he had been given a flexibility unavailable to the phalangite without the integration of different units, as Alexander the Great had done. The Romans went even further.

Unlike the Greeks, the Romans understood the battle not as a continuous process in which the first clash was decisive but as a staggered encounter, in which there could be delay between each stage. This implied that the main component of each stage had to be geared to support the preceding stage of combat, for each component of the Roman legion had a particular role to fulfill. The velites, who opened the battle, were entrusted with disorganizing the enemy by showering them with javelins. The gap behind them, in the supporting line of the hastati, allowed the velites greater freedom than the corresponding lighter infantry of the Hellenistic armies, who must have found it either impossible or very dangerous for the integrity of the line to withdraw through the serried ranks of the phalanx. A case in point would be the battle of Cynoscephalae, discussed later.

The hastati, now forming a uniform line without gaps, would follow up the action of the velites by surging forward and launching their pila, first the lighter one and then, at a shorter distance, their heavier one, before en-

gaging the enemy in hand-to-hand combat with their swords. The purpose of the hastati was to defeat the enemy there and then or at least to wear it down with their attacks. If they did not succeed in putting it to flight, the principes would advance and the hastati would withdraw behind the triarii. The purpose of the principes was to break the enemy down, but, if this failed, they too withdrew behind the triarii, who had been standing behind them, kneeling with their left feet forward, shields leaning against their shoulders and their long spears thrust into the ground, thereby providing a "bristling palisade"⁴³ for the velites and the hastati and now the principes who had sought refuge behind them.

It is clear that if the principes also withdrew, the battle had probably been lost, but the presence of the long spears of the triarii allowed the army a retreat less fraught with danger, usually to the safety of the camp. For here too, the Romans differed greatly from the Greeks.⁴⁴ The Greek camp was struck on the best available position near their marching line; the Romans' main concern was to make a camp that was perfectly defensible everywhere. Since familiarity brings security, they would always encamp using a similar pattern—the same roads, the same deployment, the same gates—so that in case of danger, they could line up for battle as speedily as possible and in case of defeat, they could seek refuge in a familiar and well-defended place.⁴⁵

The use of a second and third line and thus of a shorter deployment made the Romans more open to a flank attack against a longer line, especially if their cavalry was inferior to the enemy's, for the function of Roman horsemen seems largely to have been to defend the flanks of the foot soldier or to pursue a defeated enemy. Yet the flexibility of the deployment of hastati and principes made them, even in the absence of a long spear, also capable of maneuvering quickly and thus of having a better chance to meet any attempt to outflank them. In addition, the presence of a second and third line introduced a new dimension to tactical confrontation, for even if the hastati were utterly defeated, a buoyant but probably disorganized and depleted enemy still had to face a line of fresh soldiers, the principes, and then yet another line, the triarii, who had taken no part at all in the battle so far. Finally, the use of more than one line reshaped the concept and role of leadership. Unlike the great leaders of the Greek and Hellenistic period, the Roman general did not have to risk his life on the front line because the nature of the deployment of his soldiers and the staggered shape of the encounter required a continuous flow of decisions, not just the initial ones. A commander's life was too valuable to be risked in a mad rush against the enemy, as had been the case with Alexander at Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela. The Roman system, however, could only operate if there was an effective chain of command at the rank-and-file level and if there was a good method of identification for the various units as a rallying point for

the soldiers and as a point of direction in case of advance or withdrawal during the battle. The Romans were successful in both cases. The centurions, who were the leaders of the maniples (2 in the front rank, with 2 other rearguard officers, *optiones*, for each manipulus⁴⁶), were the true backbone of the Roman army. In addition, the use of standards for each unit served as an effective point of orientation for the soldier.⁴⁷

The centurions were clearly a key to the system, but their success was made possible only because of the horrible punishments and magnificent rewards that the command could mete out, for "Man [says A. du Picq] is flesh and blood; he is body and soul. And, strong as the soul often is, it can not dominate the body to the point where there will not be a revolt of the flesh and mental perturbation in the face of destruction."⁴⁸ The man in battle is not "the calm, settled, unfatigued, attentive, obedient soldier" of the maneuver field; he is instead "the nervous, easily swayed, moved, troubled, distraught, excited, restless being, not even under self control . . . from the general to the private."⁴⁹

As du Picq writes, the Roman general heightened the soldiers' morale "not by enthusiasm but by anger." He made their life "miserable by excessive work and privation,"⁵⁰ so that they would look forward to the battle to release their anger and frustration. The system worked well because those who threatened the security of the whole by acting in a treacherous, cowardly, or even careless manner would surely meet the most fearsome punishments conceivable. It was not a matter of a military code of regulations because such a code did not exist; it involved a body of customs that set military discipline at a level different from private or public law.⁵¹ The punishable infractions were varied. There were those that related to the safety of the whole army, such as falling asleep during the watch duties, abandoning one's post in a covering force, or throwing away one's weapons during a battle;⁵² there were others that referred to disobedience of a specific order, such as engaging the enemy while one was supposed to simply reconnoiter their forces;⁵³ there were offenses that related to the assessment of one's own behavior on the battlefield (it was forbidden to make a false report of bravery to gain distinction⁵⁴); and finally, there were infractions that were considered a danger to the values or harmonious working of a community of soldiers—stealing from the camp, giving false witness, committing homosexual acts, or being found guilty of the same offense for the third time.⁵⁵

The punishments could include fines, confiscation of goods, and flogging, but from Polybius's account,⁵⁶ death seems to have been meted out for most of the offenses. The tribunes court-martialed the accused on the spot. If at the conclusion of the evidence, a tribune touched the accused lightly with a cudgel, it was a signal for the rest of the soldiers that he was guilty. They would then advance and pummel the accused with stones and clubs

until he was dead. But even if he survived, what life was left for him, says Polybius? He could not return to his home, and his family would not dare to receive him—he was “utterly ruined.”⁵⁷

If the guilty were not single soldiers but entire groups, such as maniples abandoning their post in a moment of danger, then the punishment was meted out by decimation. A tenth of those guilty were executed publicly, and the rest were put on rations of barley instead of wheat and compelled to establish their quarters outside the perimeter of their fortified camp, making them easy prey for a marauding enemy.⁵⁸ But there is probably no better example of the ruthlessness of Roman discipline than the punishment that the consul Titus Manlius meted out to his son during the 340 B.C. campaign against the Latins.⁵⁹ When the son returned to his father and proudly showed him the spoils gained by accepting a duel with the enemy, Titus Manlius “straightaway” turned from him without a word and “commanded a trumpet to sound the assembly.”⁶⁰ There, the consul accused his son of having “broken military discipline” by engaging in a fight while he had been sent only to reconnoiter. His son’s behavior had shown that he held “in reverence neither consular dignity nor a father’s dignity.” His punishment had to be death as “a stern example, but a salutary one, for the young men of the future.”⁶¹ It was a brutal action that had its rewards in making the soldiers “more obedient to their general; and not only were guard-duties, watches, and the ordering of outposts, everywhere more carefully observed, but in the final struggle, as well, when the troops had gone into battle, that stern act did much good.”⁶²

The system worked because punishment was not just the prerogative of the officers and thus of the better off. Just as the rank and file were answerable to the tribunes, the tribunes were answerable to the consuls,⁶³ and, in the last analysis, the consuls were answerable to the senate and the Roman people. Moreover, the aim of discipline was not simply to punish those who broke the body of military customs but also to emphasize one’s “devotion” and “courage,”⁶⁴ for it is clear from Polybius that the reverse side of the coin was the gifts, rewards, and decorations that went to those who distinguished themselves on the battlefield.⁶⁵ These were awards the winner would cherish forever, placed in the most conspicuous place in his own household and worn during religious processions.⁶⁶

The Romans seemed to have had a realistic grasp of the psychology of front-line fighting. The deployment of their lines suggests that they had refined to the utmost the second most important point of a soldier’s efficiency in the heat of confrontation. On one hand, they forced him to obey by stern discipline, easy recognition of his own unit, and an excellent chain of command at the lower level; on the other, they provided him with as much mental security as possible so that he would not break and run.⁶⁷ As du Picq says, “The number of ranks [6 for the hastati and principes and 3 for the

triarii, per Delbrück⁶⁸] was calculated according to the moral pressure that the last ranks could sustain.”⁶⁹ The Greeks too must have taken this into account, first by making the normal depth of their phalanx only 8 men deep and second by cushioning the weaker members of the line between the front-rankers and the veterans in the back.⁷⁰ Yet du Picq is certainly correct that the Greek system of mental security did not work well when they moved from 8 to 16 or 32 men, which seems to have become increasingly common after Leuctra and Mantinea.⁷¹ But there is no doubt that the Roman deployment allowed the soldiers of each line to feel the excitement of the confrontation without the disheartening effect of being too close or too removed from the battle. In other words, the second line, the principes, and the third line, the triarii, were far enough not to be greatly disheartened by an unfavorable turn yet close enough to intervene if things did not proceed well for their army.

War as a Social Organism

What made the Romans quite different from the Greeks and the Macedonians and any of their adversaries was also their more deliberate use of war as the lifeline of their social organism. There is no doubt that there were a number of reasons motivating both the ruling classes and the commoners to support and wage war—the desire for profit, fear of a powerful neighbor, the stride toward fame and glory, or the sense of collective brutality that Polybius calls *bía*. Yet the most powerful incentive must have been the fact that war defined the Roman community and thus was a necessary element for the social balance of the state. The state would deteriorate, torn by internal illnesses, and die if the community was away from the battlefield. It is a message that is at least partly conveyed in Livy’s description of a military engagement in the year 303, which was passing by without any war: “Lest, however, they [the Romans] should pass the whole year entirely without fighting, the consuls made a small sortie into Umbria, because it was reported that armed men were making plundering raids on the countryside from a cave.”⁷²

War did not level Roman society. It is likely that military success increased, on one hand, the economic and social disparities of the citizen body. But, on the other hand and in a strange manner, it also attenuated, at least until the middle of the second century B.C., the inevitable conflicts arising between the “haves” and the increasing number of “have-nots” in the countryside and in the city. As the Roman dominion grew, more men were needed to defend or expand the dominion. Yet it was also apparent that, while Roman armies triumphed, symptoms of social instability might have increased among the lower levels of Roman society. A case in point is the crisis caused by indebtedness in the fourth century B.C. among the city’s

plebeians.⁷³ The situation became more serious as the manpower pool available to the richer Romans increased with the enslaving of many of the defeated people. For instance, in 262, during the First Punic War, Livy says that the Romans took 25,000 people in captivity after the fall of Agrigentum in Sicily.⁷⁴ In other words, the success in war strengthened the upper classes' economic hold over Roman society by providing them with cheaper and abundant manpower and with more land taken from the defeated enemy. The *ager Romanus* (the territory of the Roman state) grew from 822 square kilometers in 510 to 23,226 in 264.⁷⁵ Yet war might have alienated other sectors of the population from the rest of society by worsening their status. In reality, the harshest elements of this development would appear only during the latter part of the second and in the first century B.C. For the moment, they were kept within careful limits since war acted not only as an agent of wealth for the powerful but also as an agent of internal peace and order for the rest of the population. War could provide benefits to all. The strain caused by the impoverishment of city dwellers and of the small farmers was relieved with the creation of colonies. Sixteen new colonies were founded between 334 and 263,⁷⁶ as were 15 Roman colonies and 4 Latin colonies between 200 and 177 B.C.⁷⁷ Although there were variations from colony to colony, the amount of land granted to the settlers could be quite substantial, making the colonization very attractive especially among the poorer elements of the Roman population.⁷⁸

The process had a double impact on internal order. It convinced some of the alienated to consider the state again as their own, changing their status of poverty to self-sufficiency and sometimes even to affluence. And it removed elements of potential political disturbance from the city and the countryside. The colonists, if they were Roman citizens, still kept their citizenship; yet away from Rome, their threat to the political order was reduced to a minimum. Moreover, colonization was, as Emilio Gabba maintains, a constant restatement of the ideal social make-up of the Roman Republic: The good citizen is a small farmer, the small farmer is a soldier. This idea is powerfully conveyed in Cato's *praefatio* to his *De agri cultura*.⁷⁹

The army as a vehicle of social mobility became refined during the imperial period, when war benefited soldiers in several ways. Some of the colonies were founded with veterans; some soldiers received grants of lands on discharge; and some who had risen to the rank of centurion were assured that they and their families could aspire to a certain amount of upward mobility. These processes seem to have been rarer during the Republican period, but, like the colonies' settlements, they must have been present to a certain degree even then. It was a mechanism that would tie the poorer elements of the Roman state to a warlike policy.⁸⁰

The beneficial aspect of war as the lifeline of the social organism was also reflected in the methodical, clever way of integrating many of the subject

Italic people into Rome's military system and society. Colonies were also founded with allies. Unlike the Roman citizens, the settlers of Latin colonies lost their Roman citizenship,⁸¹ but their financial gains were similar in terms of land grants to those allocated to the Romans. There was also another important way in which they made war an agent of political cohesion for the noncitizens. The Romans rejected the parasitic notion of Greek warfare, which treated the conquered as elements to be exploited and kept at the margins of the state.⁸² Except in a few cases, especially if the enemy was considered too dangerous or untrustworthy (the case that comes to mind is the city of Capua, which sided with the Carthaginians during the Second Punic War), Rome tried to integrate the defeated into its military system. As V. Ilari has shown,⁸³ the Roman armies were Italian armies in the sense that normally 50 percent of the manpower was provided by allies. This policy gave the defeated a reason to be loyal to their conquerors, but it was also a way to keep social disorder to a minimum. Unlike the Spartans who saw war as an element of social disruption, making them shy away as much as possible from confrontations with the outside, the Romans needed war to keep the newly subjugated people from conspiring against the state. Maintaining them at war with newfound enemies and thus holding out the prospect of practical and psychological gains usually meant that the subjects had little time and reason to revolt against the Romans.⁸⁴ The system did not always work, not only with the Samnites especially in the exceptional circumstances of the Second Punic War but sometimes even with the Latins. Yet on the whole, it was remarkably successful for most of the Republican period until the second century B.C. It is no wonder that the Romans lived and breathed wars the way no people of antiquity had before them, with the probable exception of the Assyrians. Beginning with the early days of the Republic, the Romans, schooled in the everyday existence of real or perceived dangers from outside their borders and by their economic, social, and psychological needs, "molded an ethos that raised the capacity for violence to the status of virtue."⁸⁵ It is no surprise that they would be highly successful against the heirs of Alexander.

The Legion Versus the Phalanx

F. W. Walbank is typical of a number of scholars in terms of his comparison of the efficacy of the Hellenistic military system and the Roman war machine. The phalanx of the army of Philip V, which went down to defeat at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C., was too rigid and specialized—"parts in a machine rather than separate fighting men," a formation "especially liable to break up on rough ground" and "almost unprotected on the flanks."⁸⁶ Walbank is correct, if we understand his words to mean that the legion was superior to the phalanx, for, as Polybius says, on the battlefield, "the Romans

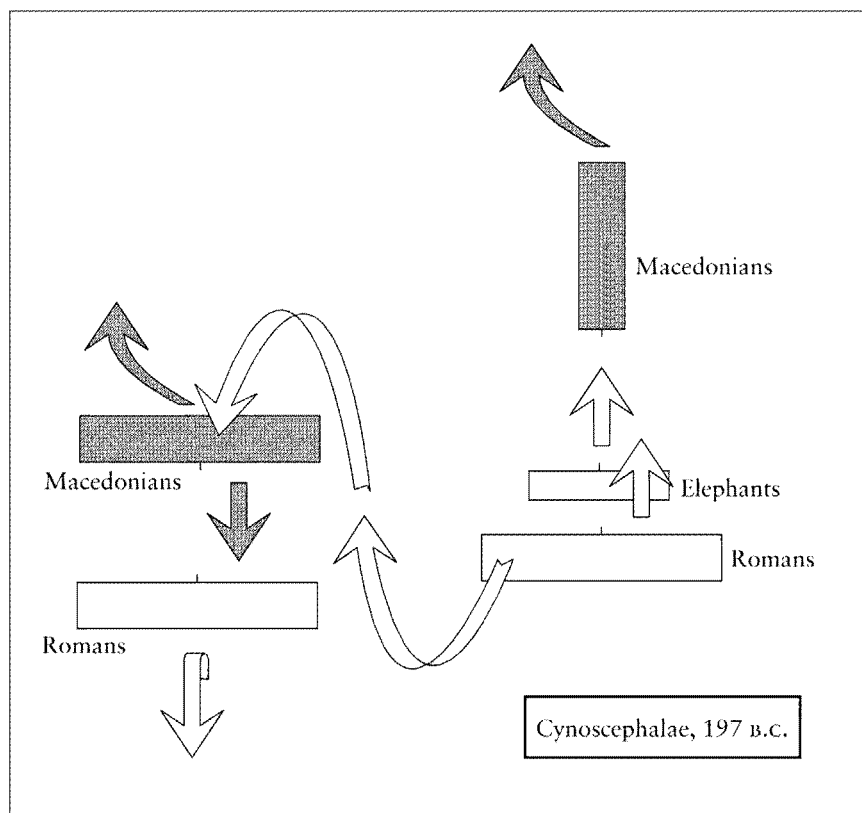


FIGURE 6.1

have always carried off the palm.”⁸⁷ This was the lesson that came out of the defeat of the Macedonian phalangites under Philip V at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C. and under Perseus at Pydna almost thirty years later, in 168 B.C.

At Cynoscephalae (Figure 6.1) the two opposing armies were almost equal in number. The Romans had 26,000 soldiers, of which 8,000 were allied Greeks. Of these, a little more than 2,000 were cavalry. Moreover, they also had a number of elephants. The Macedonians mustered an army of 25,500 men and 2,000 horsemen. About 16,000 of the footmen were Macedonian phalangites; the rest were mostly mercenaries or allies.⁸⁸

Many ancient battles have the characteristics of a stage play, where in spite of the brilliance of the actors or the importance of the subject matter, the various scenes follow a well-known script and deviations are few or impossible. But this was not so at Cynoscephalae. On the day of the battle, the two armies were seeking each other, but neither was prepared for battle. At the dawn of that particular day, owing to a violent night thunderstorm,

a thick mist covered the rough and broken terrain, so that "one could not see even people who were close at end."⁸⁹

The eventual battle would be played in six stages. In the first, a covering force that Philip sent to occupy the summits dividing the two armies and 10 Roman squadrons and 1,000 light infantry pushing forward in reconnaissance surprised each other in the mist.⁹⁰ When the skirmish started to go badly for the Roman forces, the second stage began, with reinforcements being fed from the camp of the Roman general Titus Flamininus in the form of 500 horsemen and 2,000 foot soldiers under the leadership of 2 tribunes. The arrival of the reinforcements turned the tide in favor of the Romans.⁹¹ The third stage was set when Philip, in a countermove, poured his Thessalian and Macedonian horsemen and all his mercenaries, except the Thracians, into the fray. The action brought a clear advantage to the Macedonians over the Roman forces, which probably would have been routed if not for the harsh resistance put up by the allied Aetolian cavalry.⁹²

By now, the initial skirmishes had begun to mushroom into a full-scale encounter, first realized, as would have been normal, by Flamininus, for at this stage, his forces were on the losing end of things. As a result, he drew up the rest of his men in order of battle.⁹³ It was the beginning of the fourth stage, which Philip continued, partially as a reaction to Flamininus but more because of the glowing reports that some of his soldiers were giving him of the battle taking place for the control of the summits.⁹⁴ The Macedonian king made a poor decision because the ground was very rough and uneven⁹⁵ and as such hardly suitable to his phalanx and because apparently he did not muster his full complement of soldiers: A "fair number of men" had been sent away from his camp to forage.⁹⁶ Moreover, it is also clear from the development of the battle that, though Philip was able to bring his right wing into speedy contact with the Roman legions of the left, his own left, owing either to the difficulty of the ground or to the distance to cover or to their unready state to start with, was unable to close in time with the rest of the Roman army.⁹⁷

Philip quickly marched his right wing toward the summit. On reaching it, he wheeled to the left so that he could line up his men in order of battle and rejoiced at the apparent success that his advance guard was still having against the Romans.⁹⁸ But the success did not last long, for now Flamininus, who had already deployed his men, pushed ahead his legionaries against the Macedonian skirmishers, changing the Roman retreat into an advance. Thus Philip, who had hoped to follow in his skirmishers' footsteps, was instead forced to receive his retreating men by lining them to the right of the phalanx, then to double the depth of phalangites to sixteen, and finally to attack to turn the scales in his favor.⁹⁹

The fifth stage of the battle began with the clash of Philip's pikemen against the Roman legionaries of the left, a fight that soon turned in favor

of the Macedonians.¹⁰⁰ It was at this stage that Flamininus, aware that his left was on the brink of defeat, decided that the battle could still be won by success on the right.¹⁰¹ There, the Roman victory came easily, for the Macedonian left, hampered by the terrain and “having no one to give them orders,”¹⁰² was still streamlined in order of march, and it gave way easily when the Roman elephants moved forward to attack.¹⁰³

The fifth stage closed, then, with the two right wings victorious, a situation that under normal hoplite and Hellenistic warfare could have ended either in a draw or more likely in a confrontation between the two winners.¹⁰⁴ In reality, things turned out differently for Philip. Although some of the Romans (probably the first line of the *hastati*) put the defeated enemy left wing to the sword,¹⁰⁵ a tribune whose name is unknown, says Polybius, aware that the Romans of the left were under great difficulty, wheeled 20 maniples, likely from the second line (the *principes*) and the third line (the *triarii*) of the victorious Roman right,¹⁰⁶ and fell upon the rear of the Macedonian phalanx. Philip’s phalangites were thus caught between two fires, the newly arrived maniples on their rear and the Romans whom they had been fighting on their front.¹⁰⁷ It was a situation that came as a surprise even to Philip. Since he had been fighting on the right, he was unaware of the events on his left, and he had thought that he had won the day until he saw the rear ranks of his apparently victorious right wing throw away their shields after the arrival of the 20 maniples.¹⁰⁸ The king withdrew and saved his life;¹⁰⁹ his men did not.

The sixth stage of the battle ended in a bitter, confused, and bloody scene. When the Macedonian phalangites realized that they could not win the day and that they were surrounded, they held up the pikes, the normal Macedonian sign either of surrender or of moving over to the enemy side. Flamininus, who understood the meaning of the gesture, was undecided whether to spare the beaten force, but some of the Roman soldiers, probably unaware that the gesture meant surrender, fell upon the Macedonians, cutting them down. “Most of them perished, a very few of them escaping after throwing away their shields.”¹¹⁰

The two armies had begun the encounter almost equal in number—26,000 Romans and 25,500 Macedonians. Now on the battlefield lay 700 Romans and 8,000 enemies killed.¹¹¹ *Cynoscephalae* is a clear example of the awesome power of the phalanx in spite of its defeat. The terrain (the higher ground), the depth of the formation (16 ranks), and the *sarissa* (the pike against the sword) gave Philip’s right wing “a decided advantage”: The phalangites “acquitted themselves splendidly in the battle.”¹¹² It could not have been otherwise, for “nothing can withstand the charge of the phalanx as long as it preserves its characteristic formation and force.”¹¹³ It was an experience that the Romans would relive in an even more bitter form some twenty-nine years later at Pydna.

The opponent at Pydna (Figure 6.2) was the Macedonian army of Perseus, the son of Philip V and the new king of Macedonia. The Roman army numbered about 38,000 (33,400 infantry, 4,200 horsemen, and 22 elephants); the Macedonians had about 44,000 men, divided into 4,000 cavalry, 19,000 light troops, and 21,000 phalangites (3,000 of whom were elite troops).¹¹⁴ The terrain at Pydna was uneven at the foothills, where the Romans of consul Aemilius Paulus had established their camp. But the initial stage of the battle took place in the plain below, which was well suited for the Macedonian phalangites.¹¹⁵

The Macedonians were the first to attack on the left and left-center of their line, where 6 Roman allied cohorts stood. It began very badly for the Romans. Aemilius Paulus was dismayed to find that the Macedonians "had already planted the tips of their long spears in the shields of the Romans, who were thus prevented from reaching them with their swords."¹¹⁶ It was a losing proposition for his brave soldiers. As Polybius says, a Roman needed 6 feet to operate well with his sword, but since the phalangite used only 3 feet to deploy and since he had in front of him at least 4 more spear points, the phalanx could present at least 8 and probably 10 spears in a frontage of 6 feet. In other words, there would be between 8 and 10 phalangites against 1 legionary.¹¹⁷ Paulus would confess later in his life that he "had never seen a sight more fearful," so much so that even many years later, he could not hide his emotion in recounting it.¹¹⁸ The sarissae provided a barrier that neither device nor courage seemed able to overcome. The leader of a group of soldiers in an allied Roman cohort even threw his men's standard into the ranks of the enemy, hoping that the desire to retrieve it would spur his soldiers to even greater feats, for it was "an unnatural and flagrant thing to abandon a standard."¹¹⁹ This tactic had been used with great success in another battle, against the Celts in the 190s in Italy.¹²⁰ Yet at Pydna, no desire to retrieve the standard, no attempt to thrust aside the sarissae of their enemies, no clashing of shields against them, and not even the desperate seizing of spearpoints with one's own hands succeeded.¹²¹ The 6 allied cohorts were beaten back, and when the 2 legions of the center entered the fray, they too were forced to retreat.¹²²

Yet both at Cynoscephalae and at Pydna, the phalanx was ultimately cut to pieces, for this type of formation had a serious shortcoming, at least vis-à-vis the legion: There was "only one time and one place in which it [could] perform its peculiar service."¹²³ "Level and clear ground with no obstacles" was required for the phalanx to perform well, but such suitable terrain was rarely encountered.¹²⁴ Apparently, terrain of this type was available both at Pydna and at Cynoscephalae, for we know that Perseus found a "plain for his phalanx" with "firm standing and smooth ground,"¹²⁵ and probably at least Philip's right wing at Cynoscephalae must have found a suitable terrain to deliver its shattering charge against the Roman left. Yet

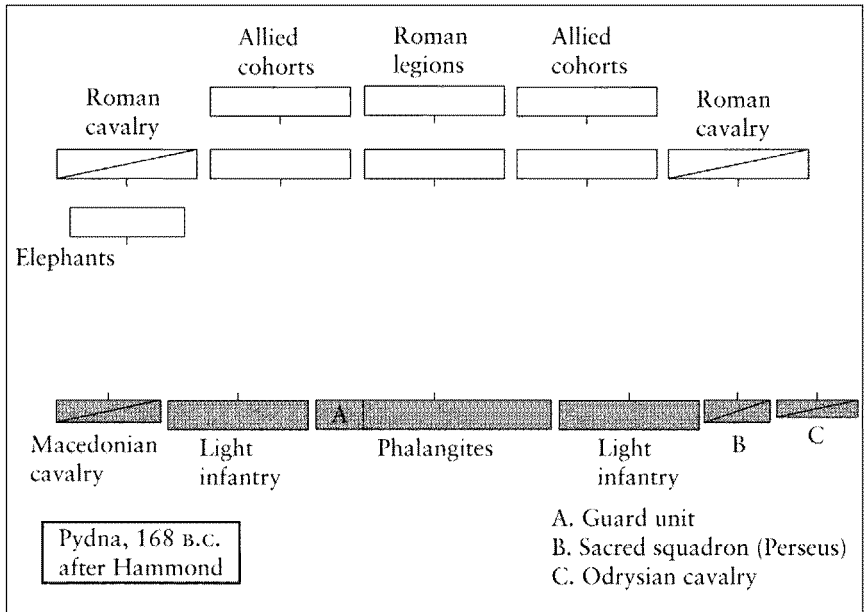


FIGURE 6.2

in both cases, this advantage was not enough. At Cynoscephalae, the Macedonian left never had the time to deploy properly, “the difficulty of the ground” being one of the reasons.¹²⁶ At Pydna, the phalanx seems to have pursued the retreating Romans, but as it moved toward the foothills, the ground became uneven, which meant that it could not keep its line and as a result showed “many intervals and clefts in it.” It was the opening for which Paulus was waiting. He divided his cohorts into smaller groups of men and ordered them to plunge into the “interstices” and “empty spaces” of the phalanx, “not fighting a single battle against them all, but many separate and successive battles.”¹²⁷

Paulus’s orders proceeded smoothly from him to his officers and from the officers to the rank and file. The Romans plunged into the spaces of the phalanx and turned the large battle into separate encounters, where they held a definite edge. What could the poor Macedonian soldier, with his inferior sword and smaller shield, do against the Roman gladius and the Roman scutum? The situation became tragic for the Macedonians when the Roman right, which had been beaten back in the initial clash, began a counterattack in coordination with the legionaries of the center. The elephants and the Roman cavalry, stationed at the end of the right wing, assaulted the Macedonian left. The enemy cavalry, terrified by the

elephants,¹²⁸ withdrew toward their right, leaving the left flank of their line unprotected. The phalanx—disordered by the legionaries, penetrated in its gaps, and attacked by the elephants and horsemen on the flank and rear—“was broken up”; their efficiency lost, the Macedonian soldiers “made a poor resistance and at last were routed.”¹²⁹ The only exception was the elite group of 3,000 Macedonians who fought to the last man.¹³⁰ The battle, begun in the afternoon, lasted about an hour. Dead on the battlefield lay 20,000 Macedonians; 10,000 were taken prisoners. The Romans lost only 80 to 100 men.¹³¹ Like their comrades at Cynoscephalae, the phalangites at Pydna could, in the end, do little against the legion.

The final attack of Paulus's men revealed a number of the phalanx's shortcomings: The Romans had divided their cohorts, but the phalangites could not; the Romans had plunged into the interstices, but the pikemen had no alternative but to maintain their line; the Romans had engaged in individual fights, but, by necessity, the Macedonians had had to fight as a whole. Finally, the Romans had used their stronger swords and shields with deadly effect, and most of all, they had shown a sophisticated chain of command that could easily transfer orders along the line. All this suggests that the legion was clearly superior to the phalanx in terms of flexibility, mobility, deployment, and chain of command. It was a lesson that had been repeated over and over again during the course of the two battles. At Cynoscephalae, troops on the Macedonian right could absorb their retreating advance units only on their flank,¹³² but Flamininus “received his advanced force into the gaps between the maniples.”¹³³ The defeat of the Roman left was not followed up by a rout,¹³⁴ as would have been normal if the phalanx had been forced to retreat. Moreover, even in victory, the phalanx always ran the risk of breaking up if it pursued the enemy.¹³⁵ Polybius is explicit on this: “Every Roman soldier, once he is armed and sets about his business, can adapt himself equally well to every place and time and can meet attack from every quarter.”¹³⁶ Moreover, although in small detachments the phalangite is “at times of little use and at times of no use at all,” the Roman soldier is “equally prepared and equally in condition whether he has to fight together with the whole army or with a part of it or in maniples or singly.”¹³⁷

The advantages of the legion are even greater if we consider its deployment and chain of command. Its deployment allowed the legion a flexibility that the phalanx, at least if not led by an Alexander, could never have. If the first line was victorious, then the second and third lines could wheel toward some other direction on the battlefield, as happened at Cynoscephalae.¹³⁸ If it was defeated or beaten back, as at Pydna,¹³⁹ the second or third line could still turn the battle in their favor. Of course, all this involved changes of aim that were not always possible on every occasion but were certainly probable for the legion, though out of reach for the phalanx. For instance, at Cynoscephalae, Philip did not become aware of the turn of

events until it was too late. In fact, he thought that he had won.¹⁴⁰ At Pydna, the right wing, where Perseus stood, apparently never came to blows with the Romans. Perseus lost control of his men soon after their deployment, and when the battle started to go badly for his soldiers, he fled.¹⁴¹ This is in sharp contrast to the ability to scan the battlefield that was demonstrated by both Paulus at Pydna and Flamininus at Cynoscephalae. Paulus kept continuous control of the battle flow. He ordered the first attack of the center legions, he again decided to send his men in small groups into the gaps of the phalanx, and he instructed his right to counter-attack the Macedonian left. Flamininus, when he saw that the battle had been lost on the left, quickly realized that he could still triumph by concentrating on the right.¹⁴² Moreover, it is likely, if we agree with F. W. Walbank, that Polybius's unknown tribune who wheeled the 20 maniples into the Macedonian right was acting under Flamininus's orders.¹⁴³ Finally, the shortcomings of the phalanx are even more apparent if, following Polybius, one shifts the focus to the strategic plane. The phalangites would be unable to challenge the enemy on any but flat terrain even if the enemy would devastate their cities and fields,¹⁴⁴ and they could do little if the enemy cut their supply line.¹⁴⁵ In other words, their options would always be limited when they were forced by the changing conditions of strategic warfare to move quickly from one area to another.¹⁴⁶

The evidence pointing out the inferiority of the phalanx by Philip V's time is incontrovertible, but Walbank's argument goes further, for he implies that the situation would have been different under Alexander. The sarissa would have been shorter, the armor of the phalangites would have been lighter, and the soldiers themselves would have been less rigid, less specialized, and more protected on the flanks.¹⁴⁷

The argument could be dismissed on the basis that any comparison would be unhistorical since one would be evaluating systems of different periods. Nor can we draw valuable indications from the chronologically acceptable confrontation in the early fourth century B.C. between Pyrrhus, who was active only a few years after Alexander, and the Romans. First of all, the war against Pyrrhus ended in stalemate between his superiority on the battlefield and Roman obstinacy; second, Pyrrhus's army was a combination of both Greek and Italian forces;¹⁴⁸ and finally and even more important is the fact that it is difficult to ascertain whether the Roman military system differed much from that of the Greeks at that time in terms of both weapons and deployment.

In fairness to Walbank, his argument also seems to rest on the assumption that Alexander's army was not just a matter of phalangites but also of horsemen—the proportion of foot soldiers to horsemen in 334 B.C. was 6 to 1. But in two battles between the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Romans, there were only 1,200 horsemen against 27,600 footmen at Sellasia and only

2,000 horsemen out of a total of 25,500 troops at Cynoscephalae.¹⁴⁹ Yet there too, the argument rests on shaky ground because it assumes that the invading army of Alexander was the norm. The high proportion of horsemen at the crossing of the Hellespont was a must for a force embarking on the conquest of a large empire. In more normal circumstances, the proportion was much more modest—16 to 1 in the army of Philip II against the Illyrians and 30 to 1 at Chaeronea.¹⁵⁰ It seems reasonable, however, to assume that Alexander's success indicated that the road to follow was to concentrate on a fine balance between foot and horse soldiers. In this sense, the true heir of Alexander was not any one of the various Successor kings but the great Carthaginian general Hannibal.

Hannibal as Alexander's Heir

When Hannibal decided to march to Italy in the spring of 218 B.C. (Figure 6.3),¹⁵¹ one of his friends warned that there was only one way to reach Italy: Hannibal "must teach his troops to eat human flesh and accustom them to this."¹⁵² Carthaginian troops never came to that, but they would pay dearly for their trek from Spain through the southern lands of the Gauls and finally across the snow-capped Alps. Yet by midsummer of the year 218 B.C., the time had come for Hannibal to fulfill his boyhood oath to his father—never to become a friend of the Romans.¹⁵³ It was, however, not just a matter of an oath. Slowly but relentlessly, Rome had been edging Carthage out of its dominance of the western Mediterranean. First Sicily, then Sardinia after a bitter dispute, and then Corsica had been added to the Roman Empire. Now, the most recent issue involved Spain, where the two imperial powers had again come into bitter contact, specifically over the city of Saguntum and generally over the control of a land rich in mineral deposits. It was the spark that would unleash sixteen years of destruction in the western Mediterranean.¹⁵⁴ In reality, the conflict had been inevitable because of the way the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.) had ended. The Roman terms of peace had been harsh and unbearable. Peace could have prospered only if the Romans had destroyed Carthage's ability to recover, but they had not done so. Consequently, it was inevitable that Carthage would have to strike again.¹⁵⁵

The Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.) would be the most serious challenge of Rome's long history. The conflict would also show that even the most perfect Hellenistic military machine could not stand in the long run against the might of the Roman state. It was the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. The drama would be played on the pale green terrain of Italy, on the yellow ochres of the southern Iberian peninsula, and finally, on the golden soil of North Africa.

Hannibal's plan had first called for enticing the Romans to Spain, defeating them there, and then marching to Italy.¹⁵⁶ The Romans' plan too had been different at the beginning, for they had intended to attack on two fronts, sending two armies out of Italy—one to Spain, the other to Carthage's home soil, North Africa.¹⁵⁷ Both strategies, however, had to be revised. A revolt in the northern part of Italy, Gallia Cisalpina, delayed the army of Spain on the west side of the Alps, forcing Hannibal to move before the Roman army had reached the Iberian peninsula. By the end of July 218 B.C.,¹⁵⁸ the Carthaginian host had crossed the Pyrenees on its way to Italy. Hannibal led a little less than 60,000 men—50,000 foot soldiers, 9,000 horsemen, and 37 elephants.¹⁵⁹ After a long journey and the bitter crossing of the Alps, snow and ice already on the ground of the mountain passes, his army had shrunk to less than half its original size, decimated by desertion, the harshness of the weather, and the enmity of some of the tribes whose lands the Carthaginians had violated in their trek to Italy. Hannibal now had 20,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry troops. Only the elephants, still 37 in number, had survived the crossing unscathed.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, his army was still formidable. Like the Hellenistic military formations of the period, the Carthaginian army was a combination of different groups: Carthaginian citizens, few in numbers and usually officers since their city's main activity was commerce and trade; people from their conquered territories such as Africans and Spaniards; allies such as the African Numidians; and many Iberians, Gauls, and, later on, Italic people who served as mercenaries.¹⁶¹ It was the Carthaginian version of Alexander's Macedonians, Thessalians, Agrianians, allied Greeks, and Thracians. The similarities are even more striking if one looks at the composition of the various elements of the army. Like Alexander at the crossing of the Hellespont, when Hannibal crossed the Pyrenees, he was at the head of a force in which the proportion of horsemen to footmen was very high—1 horseman to 6 infantrymen for Alexander, 1 to 5 for the Carthaginian general. Later, after the attrition of the voyage, the proportion of horse soldiers was even higher—1 to 4. Moreover, like the army of the great Macedonian, Hannibal relied on a variety of light troops—8,000 out of 20,000 footmen when he arrived in Italy.¹⁶² And like Alexander's men, most of these were javelin-armed soldiers, not long-range missile units, of which Hannibal seems to have had only some Balearic slingers.¹⁶³

The close cooperation of the phalanx with the cavalry and the ad hoc use of the lighter units had made Alexander's army invincible. It was a lesson that Hannibal understood well, as he would show against the Romans. Yet the Carthaginian general would bring some refinements to the successful formula of the Macedonian king, for the tactical strength of Hannibal's army lay in an even more subtle cooperation between the various units. Actually, al-

though the Macedonian line infantry, the phalanx, remained one of the two keys of Alexander's success, Hannibal tended to downplay the role of his own phalanx. Its function was simply to pin the enemy so that the cavalry, after putting the opposing horsemen to flight, could veer on the flank or on the rear of the enemy footmen and destroy them. The complex maneuvers of Alexander's cavalymen were designed not so much to defeat the enemy horsemen as to find a weakness in the enemy line and then exploit it in combination with some of the heavy infantry, so that the whole battle line would eventually collapse. Hannibal's tactical use of his cavalry, by contrast, was much more direct. His formula was dictated not just by personal choice but also by the characteristics of his enemy, the Romans. For the Macedonians, a one-to-one struggle against the Persian horsemen before crushing the enemy infantry would have lowered their odds of winning the day because the enemy was superior, at least in number if not quality. All this meant that Alexander had to find another way to defeat the adversary without letting all the horsemen into the decisive stages of the confrontation. Hannibal's task in regard to the Roman cavalry was simpler, for his enemy was inferior in number and probably in quality too. But the horsemen's task against the Roman foot soldiers was infinitely more difficult than that of the Macedonians against most Persian infantrymen. Hannibal likely made a virtue of a relatively poor line infantry for, unlike the Macedonian armies of Alexander, his line footmen were normally a combination of soldiers inferior to the Romans. The best were probably his Africans, who would distinguish themselves at Cannae, and his steady, disciplined Spaniards. Yet neither group was a match for the Romans in normal circumstances, as even the battle of Trebia would show. Furthermore, Hannibal could not trust his Celts to any great degree; their first rush was justly famous in antiquity, but they lacked the staying power of a good line infantry.¹⁶⁴ In other words, Hannibal's infantry could pin and delay the Romans, but the victory had to come from other elements—the heavy cavalry and the light horsemen and infantrymen.

The Carthaginian proportion of lighter footmen vis-à-vis their line infantry was 2 to 3; in other words, they were fairly close to half the Carthaginian contingent. Moreover, a highly efficient part of the cavalry was the Numidian light cavalry.¹⁶⁵ The Carthaginian lighter units not only performed the duties of opening the battle, covering the flanks, and engaging in the pursuit of a defeated enemy but also, through the Numidian horsemen, they often played a key role in the success of the army. Armed with javelins and small bucklers, the Numidians provided the vanguard for their army on the march, harassed enemy troops day and night, and caused them serious problems by cutting their food and water supplies and by attacking foraging parties. During the battle, they would continually challenge the enemy line, trying to break it by throwing javelins at close range

and then galloping back if challenged by the enemy. Moreover, if their opponents broke, they were ruthlessly efficient in pursuit.¹⁶⁶

The complex use of the light cavalry clearly differentiated Hannibal's men from the armies of Alexander and his Successors. Yet the biggest difference was the shrewd manipulation of certain elements, discouraged by the Macedonians and certainly despised by the Romans at least in the early stages of the Punic Wars. Hannibal was a master not just in the careful reconnaissance of the terrain of battle but also in ruses, ambush, and skillful exploitation of the character of the enemy leader. The confrontations at the Trebia River, at Lake Trasimene, and at Cannae are clear examples of the tactical skill and of the innovations of the great Carthaginian general.

Romans and Carthaginians found themselves facing each other not long after Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. In early October 218 B.C.,¹⁶⁷ the consul P. Cornelius Scipio, who had tried to intercept the enemy in southern France in vain, quickly retraced his steps and tried to stop Hannibal on the plains of northern Italy near the Ticinus River. The encounter was limited to the cavalry of the two forces and resulted more from the danger of reconnoitering too close to the enemy rather than from deliberate choice.¹⁶⁸ Yet once the enemies recognized each other in the midst of the clouds of dust raised by the hooves of their horses, they quickly lined up for battle. Hannibal deployed his heavier horsemen in the center and his nimble Numidians at the wings.

As would become the norm in most of the war, the Roman center performed well and kept the enemy at bay. The resolution of the battle would come from the wings. Here the Carthaginians, who probably outnumbered the Romans 3 to 1,¹⁶⁹ outflanked the Roman line so that the Numidians, who were at the wings, could fall upon the Roman rear. Publius Cornelius Scipio, who had led his horsemen, was wounded and would have been killed had it not been for the bravery of his own son the young Scipio, who one day would conquer Hannibal and Carthage and be rewarded with the name of Africanus.¹⁷⁰

The battle of Ticinus River set up the normal pattern for the encounters between the two armies. The Romans tried to defeat the enemy by conquering the center of the battlefield; Hannibal instead used his center to immobilize the enemy. The resolution was provided by the wings, where the ability to deliver a heavy punch, as in Alexander's army, was sacrificed in favor of mobility; Hannibal deployed his most nimble horsemen there. The battle of Ticinus River also taught the Romans that the enemy's cavalry was superior to theirs.¹⁷¹ Yet this was apparently not an insoluble problem for them because they had not trusted in their horsemen to resolve the war. It was up to their heavy infantrymen to carry the day and show the might of Rome. This was the thought of the senate in Rome and apparently of the other consul, Tiberius Sempronius Longus, when he finally joined the wounded

Scipio. In the meantime, Scipio had withdrawn to a position more suitable to his infantry near the Trebia River, again in the plains of northern Italy.¹⁷²

The battle of Trebia River was a masterly display of the Carthaginian general's cunning and tactical skill.¹⁷³ Hannibal played on the psychological weaknesses of his opponent, Longus, who was given more or less a free hand while Scipio was recuperating from his wounds. Moreover, in the manner of a great tactician, Hannibal adapted his strengths and the enemy's weaknesses to the terrain. First, whether by plan or development, he gave the impression to Longus that the Romans could easily beat the Carthaginian host.¹⁷⁴ Then when the time came, he carefully staged the battle. First, he chose a spot that appeared unsuitable for an ambush, without trees and almost flat. Yet the Trebia River, with its thorny bushes and overhanging foliage, split the terrain in two, making it easy for a sizable force to hide near the potential site of confrontation between the two armies.¹⁷⁵ Hannibal made the most of this. The night before the attack, he sent his brother Mago with a select force of 1,000 footmen and 1,000 cavalry troops to hide near his camp.¹⁷⁶ The morning after, he insisted that his men take breakfast and get their horses and arms ready, and then he ordered his Numidian cavalry to advance toward the Roman camp and to provoke the Romans into action before they had had time to eat or to make any preparation for the battle.¹⁷⁷

An essential element of Hannibal's plan was his understanding of the character of his opponent Longus, who felt sure of victory. The Carthaginian's plan worked smoothly. Longus obliged him, first by rashly sending his whole cavalry against the Numidians. When his horsemen were unable to come to grips with the enemy, Longus dispatched some 6,000 lighter troops and finally his whole army—all before his soldiers had time to prepare for the wintry day and have their morning meal, apparently an important part of the Roman daily diet.¹⁷⁸ The battle probably took place in December 218 B.C.¹⁷⁹ after a night of heavy rain that had swelled the normally shallow river to breast-high depth.¹⁸⁰ But the icy waters of the Trebia did not deter the Romans from their pursuit. They crossed the river and lined up for battle in front of the Carthaginian positions (Figure 6.4). Hannibal's men apparently took their time to meet them in a pitched battle. They spent their time instead eating and drinking, grooming their horses, and anointing their bodies with oil as a protection against the cold¹⁸¹—all things that the Romans, needled by the Numidians and by the impatience of their commander, had been unable to do. But there were even worse things in store for Longus's men.

The Romans, who had 36,000 foot soldiers at their disposal (20,000 of them were, however, allies), deployed in their usual pattern with the 4,000 cavalry divided at the wings.¹⁸² The Carthaginians were clearly inferior in infantry (19,000) but superior in cavalry (9,000, including the Celtic allies);

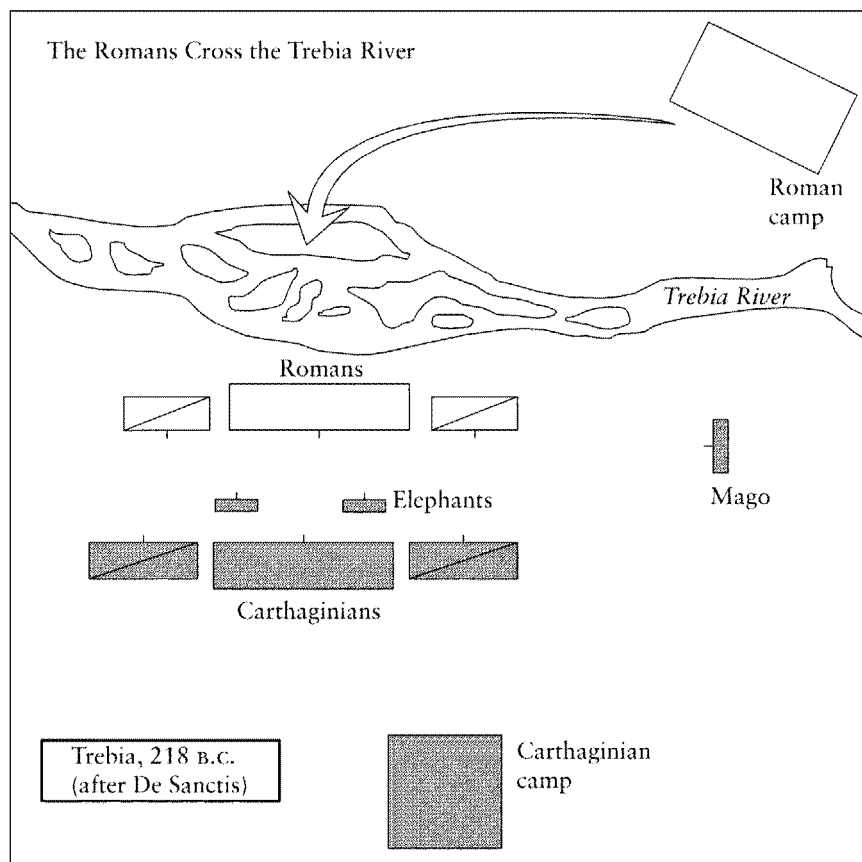


FIGURE 6.4

that is, they had more than a 2 to 1 advantage over the Romans.¹⁸³ Moreover, Hannibal's brother, Mago, had another 1,000 horsemen and 1,000 footmen lying in ambush somewhere near the banks of the Trebia. Hannibal's deployment duplicated the Romans'—his infantry in the center, his cavalry at the wings—but as an added sophistication, besides the ambushing party, he also set his 37 elephants at both ends of his infantry, just in front of the phalanx.¹⁸⁴

The battle opened with the usual pattern of light troops engaging but with the Romans having the worst of it since they now had fewer javelinmen. Some had been used against the Numidians in the early attack of the Roman camp; the rest had been rendered less effective by the river's icy waters.¹⁸⁵ These problems also plagued the Roman cavalry's javelins. Besides, they were outnumbered by the Carthaginian horsemen. The result at the wings was no

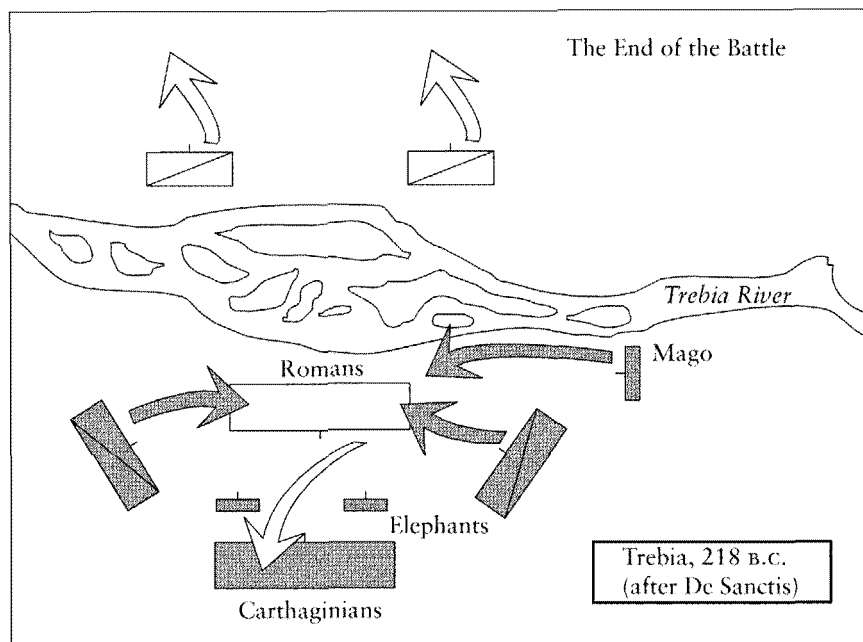


FIGURE 6.5

surprise. The tired Roman horsemen were no match for the Carthaginian cavalry. They withdrew, leaving the flanks of their foot soldiers exposed to the attacks of the Carthaginian and the Numidian cavalry.¹⁸⁶

With their cavalry fleeing off the battlefield, the Romans were now edged on two sides—the enemy line infantry and the elephants on their front, the Carthaginian and Numidian horse troops on their flank.¹⁸⁷ Their situation became desperate when Mago came out of his hiding place and hit them in the rear.¹⁸⁸ Soon after, the infantry line, except for the center, gave way to the onslaught of the enemies.¹⁸⁹ Yet it is a testimonial to the strength and discipline of the Roman footman that the center continued the battle and actually pierced the Carthaginian line (Figure 6.5). Once the Romans did so, they did not wheel and attack the enemy in the rear. They realized that the battle had been lost and that the rest of their line had either been butchered or was fleeing from the battlefield. Moreover, the whole situation was worsening because the weather conditions had become increasingly more difficult, with heavy rain now falling on the combatants. Because of this, the Romans marched off the battlefield to seek refuge in the city of Placentia. They were reduced to about 10,000 men.¹⁹⁰ The rest of the Roman troops were either killed or taken prisoner.¹⁹¹ For the Carthaginians, the main losses were in the elephants. All but one of them died but

more as a result of the weather than of the battle. The rest of the Carthaginian casualties were among the Celts, and losses among the soldiers that counted, the Carthaginians and Spaniards and, one suspects, the Numidians, were small.¹⁹²

Trebia had reconfirmed the Carthaginian pattern set at the Ticinus River with the use of an expendable center and strong wings, but it also introduced new elements into the confrontation. Hannibal carefully scrutinized the area before the battle, used the rashness of the consul Longus to his advantage, compelled the Romans to attack on ground of his own choosing (he “took the view that a decisive engagement should never be undertaken on any chance pretext and without a definite purpose”¹⁹³), used every device to curtail the Roman chances and enhance his own (breakfast, icy waters, anointing, the ambush), and finally caused large casualties among the enemy. It was a pattern repeated in an even more dramatic form at the battle of Lake Trasimene, where he adapted his strengths to both the psychology of the enemy and the characteristics of the terrain. He first surprised the Roman army located in the region by advancing through an unexpected path; indeed, Hannibal “was always inclined to such expedients.”¹⁹⁴ Then he enticed the Roman consul Gaius Flaminius to follow him into a bottleneck before the arrival of the other Roman army, which had deployed on the opposite side of the peninsula on the Adriatic coastline. Hannibal pinned the enemy with the lake at one side and the Carthaginian troops controlling the hills and the exit of the bottleneck. And again he butchered an entire Roman army, killing some 15,000 and taking about another 15,000 prisoners.¹⁹⁵

Any other state would have succumbed after this defeat, but the Romans continued the war. Approximately a year later, they had to face the greatest defeat of their history on the fields of Cannae. As at Trebia, there was disagreement on the course of action between the two Roman consuls at Cannae: As L. Aemilius Paulus urged caution and refused to accept action on a terrain better suited to Hannibal’s cavalry, the inexperienced and boastful Gaius Terentius Varro assumed that Roman arms would win the day this time.¹⁹⁶ His confidence was boosted by the remarkable array of force at his disposal—16 legions, 8 of which were Roman and 8 allied, for an unprecedented total of about 80,000 footmen and 6,000 horsemen.¹⁹⁷ Hannibal, in comparison, could not master more than half the Roman strength in terms of footmen, being disadvantaged there 2 to 1, but he again had clear superiority in cavalry, 10,000 men against the enemy’s 6,000.¹⁹⁸

With both consuls present, the Roman command alternated between them. On one of the days in which Varro held the supreme command, he decided to lead the Roman army to battle, one wing posted on the Aufidus River and the rest of the army on the plain (Figure 6.6). His legionaries were all posted in the center in an unusual formation more like columns

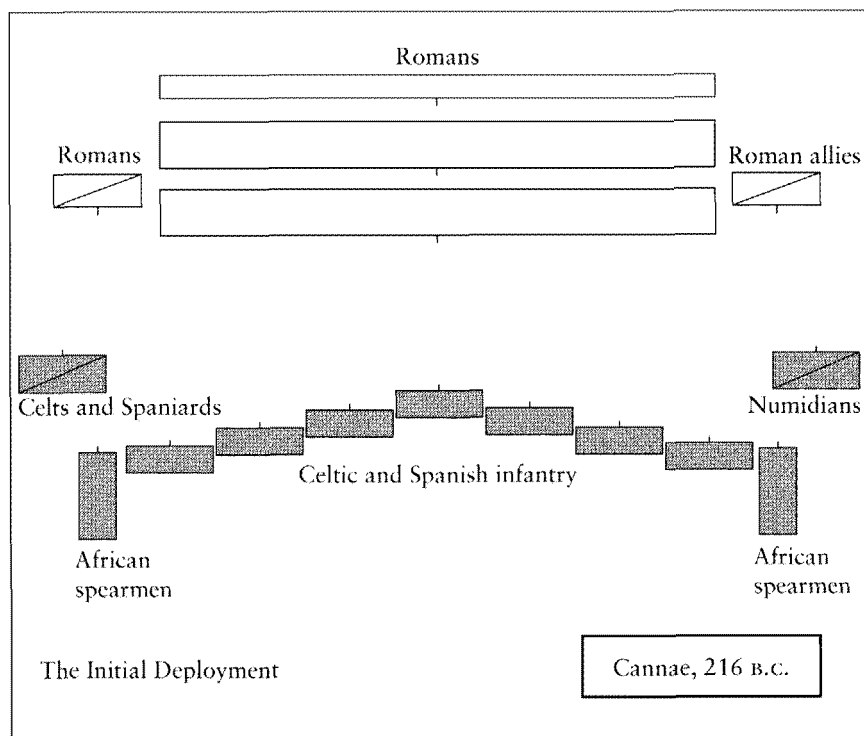


FIGURE 6.6

(since their depth had been doubled) as opposed to rather thin lines of about 8, 6, or 3 ranks each. At the right wing was the Roman cavalry, at the left the allied.¹⁹⁹ It is clear that Varro must have kept the lesson of Trebia in mind. Although the Romans had, in the end, been routed there, Trebia had also shown the power of the Roman legion vis-à-vis the Carthaginian line infantry. The Romans had pierced it even in a losing cause. Varro's aim was clear: His cavalry wings had to hold the enemy at bay; his center, superior in quality and number, was given the role of shattering the enemy center. If the Romans could reach their goal before their wings gave away, they would certainly crush the enemy this time.

Hannibal also must have had the battle of Trebia River on his mind for, although his deployment duplicated the enemy's, he added another refinement. The Celts and Spaniards in the center were flanked on both sides by the African heavy infantry, Carthaginians and Libyans, while the heavy cavalry of Celts and Iberians were posted against the Roman cavalry and the Numidians against the Roman allied horsemen.²⁰⁰ Hannibal had other things in mind, too. Although the scenario is not completely clear in Po-

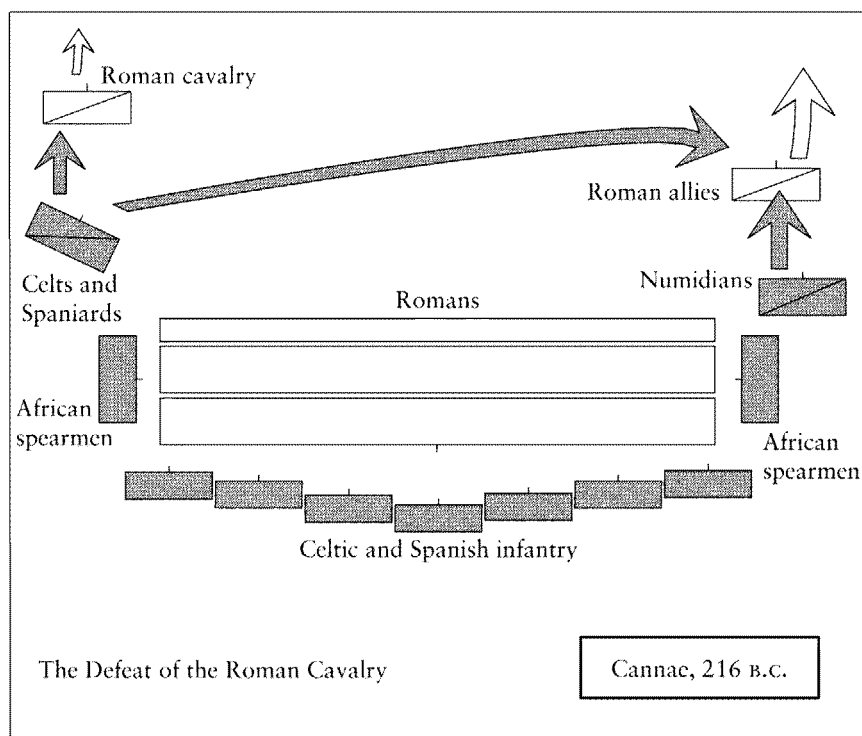


FIGURE 6.7

lybius,²⁰¹ Hannibal apparently gave orders to the cavalry on both wings and to the center of Celts and Iberians to advance to contact so that at the moment of impact with the Roman line, his infantry line must have looked like a crescent, with the round end pointing at the enemy host. The two African heavy infantry units were deployed like the sharp ends of the shape, in a refused posture and probably in a column formation. Hannibal too wanted to repeat Trebia—but without any piercing of his own center. Should that have happened, a number of his enemies would have escaped in the best case, or in the worst case, he would have lost the battle. His center was there to hold the enemy and delay its advance as long as possible, giving his cavalry time for a pincer movement.

The battle proceeded as Hannibal hoped. The Roman cavalry fought valiantly, but in the end, it was inexorably pushed back and exterminated by its larger enemy.²⁰² On the Roman left, things were not going as smoothly for the Carthaginians. The Numidian tactics of hit and run were much slower in keeping the Roman allies at bay.²⁰³ Yet the allies too were routed in the end when the victorious Celtic and Spanish horsemen of the

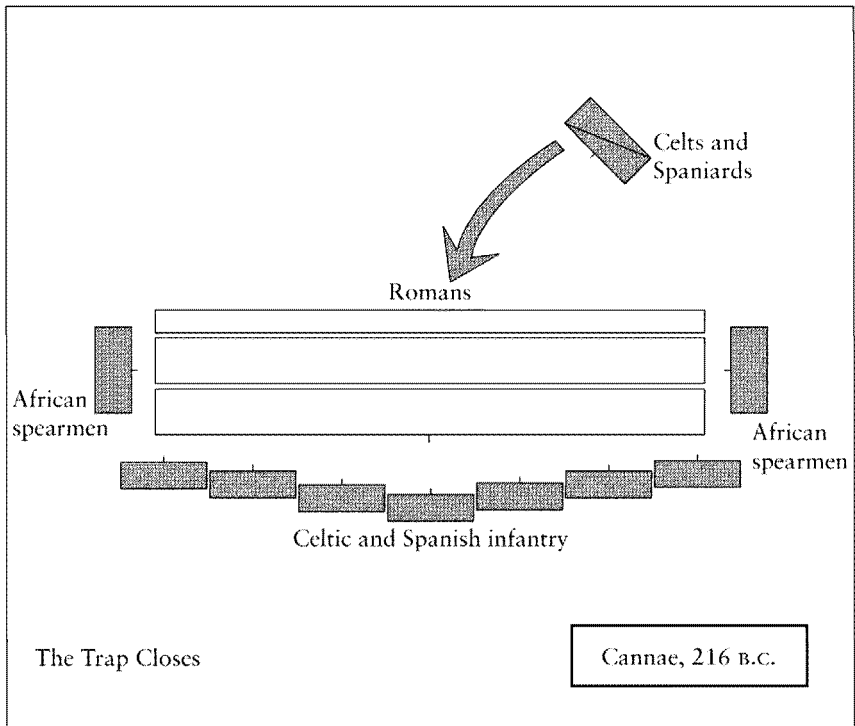


FIGURE 6.8

left veered into the rear of the allied cavalry after eliminating the Roman horse troops (Figure 6.7). Their morale in shambles, the Roman allies were routed and then pursued by the Numidians alone, troops who were at their most efficient in this role.²⁰⁴

In the center, the fighting was hard, but for the moment, no Roman breakthrough had taken place. Yet either by design or development of the action, the Roman footmen had pushed the Celts and Spaniards of the opposing center until the crescent had changed in direction, its extreme point now at the back of the Carthaginian line. Although again Polybius is unclear on this point, it seems that the Romans were on the verge of piercing the line when help for the Carthaginians came in the shape of the Africans, who now were able to attack the advancing Romans on their flanks.²⁰⁵

Any other army probably would have collapsed at that stage. Certainly, the Roman footmen were having great difficulty, but it is a testimonial to their flexibility that their collapse came only when the victorious Celtic and Spanish cavalry attacked them from the rear (Figure 6.8). The Romans, completely surrounded now, defended themselves well, but in the end they were cut down to a man.²⁰⁶ Ultimately, their large numbers and the closed

space in which they were forced to fight prevented them from using even the most elementary aspects of their battle system—they could not replace their wounded and dead, and they had too little room for proper movement.²⁰⁷ At the end of the day, according to Polybius, 70,000 Romans lay dead on the field, and 10,000 more had fallen prisoner. Of the original 6,000 horsemen, only 70 Romans and 300 allied troops had survived. The Carthaginians left 4,000 Celtic and 1,500 Spanish and African casualties, and they lost about 200 cavalrymen. Gaetano De Sanctis, however, cuts those figures drastically, putting Roman casualties at 20,000 to 25,000.²⁰⁸ Yet even if one accepts De Sanctis's calculations, the carnage was still enormous.

For the third time in a period of not much more than a year, the Roman military machine had been shattered. It seemed as if Rome now lay at Hannibal's mercy. Reality would, however, prove otherwise. As Polybius had said after Trebia, "The Romans both in public and private are most to be feared when they stand in real danger."²⁰⁹ The truth is that though Hannibal the tactician was faultless and Hannibal the strategist was clever, Hannibal the *grand* strategist was not quite so brilliant, either because of matters of his own choosing or because of the particular structure of the Carthaginian state and the corresponding nature of the Roman state.

It seems that Hannibal never thought it would be possible to destroy the Romans. What he had in mind was to humiliate Rome, to keep control of the Iberian peninsula, and to regain for Carthage what it had lost during and after the First Punic War—Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. In other words, he believed that what was at stake was the domination of the western Mediterranean. In the quest for his goal, Hannibal's plan had been rather simple: first, to draw the Romans to Spain and defeat them there and then to march to Italy. But when the Romans were detained by a revolt in northern Italy, he had decided to proceed for Italy immediately. His plan had not been lightly conceived. He had prepared his troops well before the march; he had selected only the best men possible; he had left enough soldiers to man the Carthaginian interests in both Spain and Africa; he had organized an army in the typical pattern of a conquering host (that is, with great mobility and a variety of troop types); and, like Alexander, he had tried to secure a proper base of operations before advancing into enemy territory. However, some of the assumptions underpinning his preparations would prove to be false—specifically, the belief that the Gauls of northern Italy would make common cause with the Carthaginians against the hated Romans and that, if he defeated the Romans in a great pitched battle, most of the Italian allies would defect from Rome to Carthage. The Romans would then sue for peace and accept the terms that would give the Carthaginians control of the western Mediterranean.

Hannibal's journey through the lands of the southern Gauls and his crossing of the icy Alps in the midst of local opposition are the stuff of leg-

ends. But in reality, his journey could also be interpreted as disastrous because half of his army had melted away by the time the plains of northern Italy were within his soldiers' reach. When he arrived there, his army was restless and tired. And if a more careful man than Longus had been in charge of the Romans at Trebia, it is likely that Hannibal's Italian adventure would have ended in the icy waters of the river on that cold day in December 218 B.C. Moreover, by journeying to Italy before the Carthaginians could have any hope of regaining control of the sea-lanes of the Mediterranean, he had consciously truncated his own supply lines. It was not a matter of food and water (for his victorious army had no problems securing these commodities in Italy) but of finding more men to replenish or strengthen the ranks of his original army. The land connection to Spain was long and dangerous. The Carthaginians broke through once, only to fall prey to their enemy in Italy, when at the Metaurus River in 207 B.C., almost a decade after Cannae, the Romans defeated the Carthaginian relief army under the command of Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal.²¹⁰ There were only two other instances in which the Carthaginians succeeded in breaking the Roman stranglehold, and both of them were by sea—in 215 when they landed 4,000 Numidians and 40 elephants at Locri in southern Italy and in 205 when 12,000 footmen and 2,000 horsemen reached the shores of Liguria. In the latter instance, the soldiers were never able to join up with Hannibal, who by then was bottled up in Italy's southern regions.²¹¹

Hannibal had gambled that he would receive support from the disaffected people of the Italian peninsula, but here again, he was only partially correct in assessing the situation. The Celts were eager to fight on their territories but unwilling to leave them, and the central and southern Italians, with the exception of those in the major city of Capua, never switched sides in great numbers or for a long stretch of time. In reality, Hannibal could hardly hope otherwise. It is true that both after Trebia and Trasimene, he had tried to show that his quarrel was only with Rome and that, as a token of his friendship with the rest of the Italic people subject to Rome, he freed their soldiers who had been taken prisoner during the great battles.²¹² Yet this gesture did not work in the long run. Hannibal tended to act as a conqueror of the Italian cities that he took away from the Romans, and he felt increasingly compelled to use, ineptly it would prove, diplomatic skill against them when the Romans' superior skill in siege warfare allowed them to reconquer these cities easily once Hannibal's troops had departed. Moreover, Hannibal did not have enough men to provide proper garrisons for the cities that had come over to his side. This meant that they were open to Roman reconquest and revenge and thus less prone to follow the Carthaginian leader's cause.²¹³ In fairness, the fault was not with Hannibal alone. His status as a *strategos*, rather than the overall leader of the Carthaginian state,²¹⁴ allowed him only a certain amount of freedom of ac-

tion, and it was the political leaders in Carthage, not Hannibal, who fashioned some of the major decisions. Hannibal's adventure would likely have been much more successful if the Carthaginian state had concentrated on one goal at a time—Italy and Rome alone, not Italy, Rome, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain all at the same time. Yet any change in the actions of the Carthaginian leaders would be based on the assumption that the Romans would cooperate. Furthermore, Roman strategy from the very beginning had been much more coherent than either Hannibal's or his state's grand strategy. The Romans had clearly anticipated that the issue of the war could be resolved in Africa and Spain, and before Hannibal's crossing of the Alps, their two armies had planned to do just that. Hannibal's daring and successful strike into Italy had forced the Romans to revise their plan for a while, but even in the darkest days of the war, some of their leaders (such as the Scipios) never abandoned the idea that the Carthaginians would be brought to bay by defeating them first in Spain and then on their own land, Africa.

In the end, the Romans would be proven right. But after Cannae, all this seemed just a distant dream. In the nightmare of the moment, three Roman armies had been pitilessly destroyed within the span of less than two years. Even more disheartening was the fact that an inferior Roman army, manned by spirited citizens and led by amateur commanders, was no match for a superior leader with a sophisticated mastery of the techniques of war and a professional army at his disposal. It was a recipe for disaster, as had been the case at Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae. However, Rome was simply not similar to a Greek city of the past or to any Hellenistic state of the moment. Hannibal had been wrong in believing, in the great tradition of Greek and Hellenistic warfare, that one big victory in the field would have brought the Romans to accept his peace terms. The Romans were unwilling to discuss them even when, after Cannae and for the third time in a row, their arms had been vanquished and at least 20,000 to 25,000 men had been either butchered or killed, and many more had been taken prisoner.²¹⁵ There was no peace for the Romans. It appeared that their soldiers and their city would end either in triumph or by being obliterated from the face of the earth. It was not just a matter of the advantages of a large population pool but of sheer determination and a will not to be defeated at any cost.

The magnitude of the Roman war effort in terms of recruitment is comparable only to the casualties suffered by the European nations during World War I.²¹⁶ The free population of Roman Italy in 225 B.C. was about 2,752,000. Around 923,000 of those were Roman citizens and members of their families, which meant that about 300,000 were adult males, that is, people eligible for recruitment. More than a third of these, 108,000 or a total of about 35 percent, were recruited in the first stages of the Second Punic War until 215 B.C. At least 50,000 of those recruited were killed by

that year, a casualty rate of about 10 to 12 percent of the total population and more than 16 percent of all adult males.²¹⁷ And this represented only a part of the Roman war effort in terms of manpower, for around 215 B.C., the census qualifications for military service were lowered from 11,000 to 4,000 asses, and early in 214, even 8,000 slaves were allowed to join the army.²¹⁸ All this meant that the total number of legionaries in 214 B.C. increased to 75,000, and about two years later, the figure grew to 80,000²¹⁹—that is, about double the number of Roman citizens available at Cannae. If the free population of the Italian allies and colonies is also included, the number of soldiers is doubled since the population of these territories in 225 B.C. was about 1,840,000.²²⁰ This explains why, in spite of having another 75,000 men killed between 214 and 203 B.C.,²²¹ Rome could survive and finally defeat the Carthaginians.

The ability to recruit so many soldiers tells only part of the story. The highest degree of obedience and the sense of sacrifice instilled in the Roman character were also critical. The source of this toughening of mind and body was not only the fear of punishment or the lure of rewards but also the type of society in which the Roman soldiers grew up. The state acted as an extension of the family, with the head of the family having absolute authority over the rest of the family. The consul and the senators were “a public analogue” of the family’s apparatus,²²² and the fathers of the city (the aristocracy) also totally shared in the sacrifices that they demanded from the rest of the population. During the Second Punic War, 12 out of 20 consuls died in battle over a period of ten years. Moreover, in a typical battle, it was likely that 3 out of 12 tribunes would lose their life.²²³

Hannibal could bring the Romans to their knees only by conquering the city of Rome. But unlike the impressive siege machinery and skill that his master Alexander had displayed at Tyre, Hannibal had no siege train, which is again evidence of his belief that Rome could only be conquered in a pitched battle. After Cannae, Hannibal gave the impression that he would also reduce Rome to rubble, and he advanced with his army into the proximity of the city. It was an empty gesture, criticized by many who think that Rome could have been besieged successfully. But the defenses of the city and Hannibal’s own limited manpower guaranteed failure, not success, for his arms.²²⁴ But there is still more to the story of Hannibal’s ultimate failure.

One could emphasize that Rome’s great strength lay in a number of factors—its refusal to follow the rules of Hellenistic warfare, its control of the sea, its plentiful manpower, its ability to absorb high casualty rates, and its more effective strategy. Yet the most important reason was Rome’s ability to learn from its mistakes and a willingness to copy what gave strength to others. As Polybius says, “No people are more willing [than the Romans] to adopt new customs and to emulate what they see is better done by others.”²²⁵ After Cannae, the courageous but rather foolish Romans shied

away from engaging in a fourth pitched battle, which could have finally brought them to their knees, and doggedly prepared for the moment of revenge. The policy of Q. Fabius Maximus the Delayer—to harass the enemy and carefully train new recruits—now became the rule. And in the long run, time was in Rome's favor. This would lead to the formation of an army that could match the sophistication of the enemy soldiers and to the emergence of a leader, L. Cornelius Scipio the Younger (later Africanus). Nurtured in the bitter school of Hannibal's victories, Scipio would ultimately be victorious over the man he had grown not only to fear but also to imitate.

Hannibal's Pupil: Scipio Africanus

Scipio had experienced the bitterness of the first Roman defeat at the hands of Hannibal, for as a young man he had fought at Ticinus and probably saved his own father, the Roman commander. Later, he may have fought at Trebia. He had also witnessed the great slaughter of Roman arms at Cannae.²²⁶ Yet likely because of the memory of these encounters, he would become the best imitator, student, and, in the end, master of the great Carthaginian general's art of war.

The career of arms was a Scipio family tradition. His father and uncle had served as generals in Spain between 218 and 211, both falling on the battlefield. Scipio himself had quickly risen to the summit of the Roman military structure. In 210 B.C. at the very young age of 26, he had been chosen commander of the army of Spain. He had been only 18 when the Great War had begun, but by now, he was a veteran with ten years of experience and the Ticinus, Trebia, and Cannae battles imprinted in his memory.

Scipio's final confrontation with Hannibal followed a logical and clear path, each step more complex than the previous one and each one directed toward a more subtle mastery of the art of war that had defeated the Romans over and over again. The key to final victory turned out to be a restatement of the initial Roman strategy—on one hand, to hold Hannibal in check in Italy and, on the other, to decide the war first by a victory in Spain and then by threatening Hannibal's home soil, Africa.

Within four years of his arrival in Spain, Scipio had virtually subjugated most of the peninsula to Roman control. He had begun by depriving the Carthaginians of their main deepwater port in this part of the Mediterranean when he conquered Nova Carthago after a daring siege in 209 B.C. A year later, he would defeat the Carthaginians in a difficult battle at Baecula, where the Romans had a slight numerical advantage but the Carthaginians commanded a strong position in terms of terrain.²²⁷ The most important encounter was a pitched battle at Ilipa two years later, in 206 B.C.²²⁸ The battle would not only spell the end of Carthaginian control in Spain but also show, in the most dramatic way, how much the memory

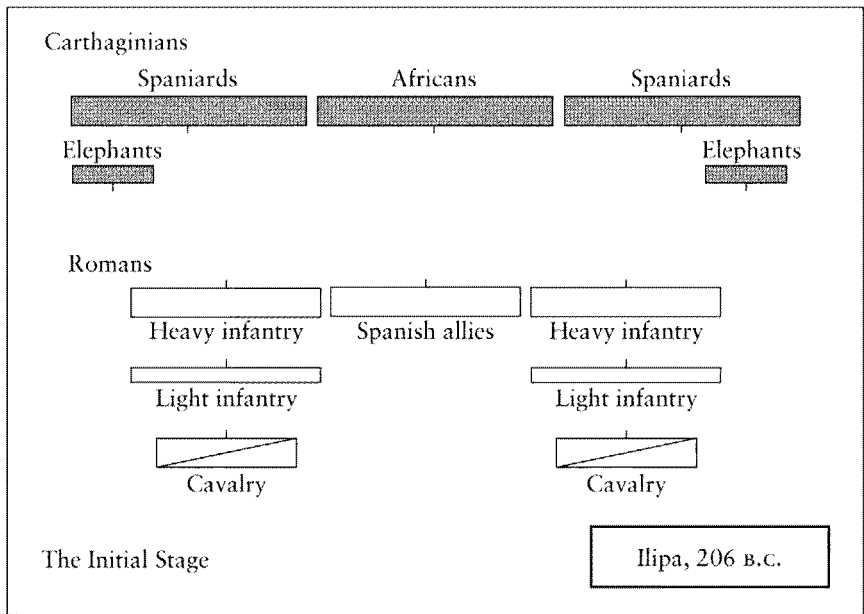


FIGURE 6.9

of the past influenced Scipio's actions on the battlefield. It is probable that the Carthaginian commander at Ilipa, Hasdrubal, son of Gisgo, had about 10,000 more men than the Romans and 32 elephants.²²⁹ In both armies, there were substantial groups of Spaniards.

For a number of days, the Carthaginians were the first to leave their camp and deploy in battle lines, always in the same order—with the Spanish infantry and cavalry on the wings, the elephants in front of the right, and the best line troops, the Carthaginians and Africans, in the center. The response of the Romans was also identical. They would come onto the battlefield after the Carthaginians and line up in the same order—their Spanish infantry at the wings, flanked by the cavalry, and the Roman footmen in the center.²³⁰ The deployment and counterdeployment became a kind of ritual until Scipio decided that the time had come to attack and to make the enemy swallow the same bitter pill that the Romans had been forced to take at Trebia. The night before the clash, he ordered his cavalry to leave their horses bridled and saddled and thus ready for action.²³¹ Then early the next morning, he had his men take breakfast and sent his horsemen and light troops forward to harass the enemy camp before the Carthaginian soldiers had eaten their morning meal.²³² Like Sempronius Longus at Trebia, the Carthaginian commander, Hasdrubal, obliged by leaving his camp be-

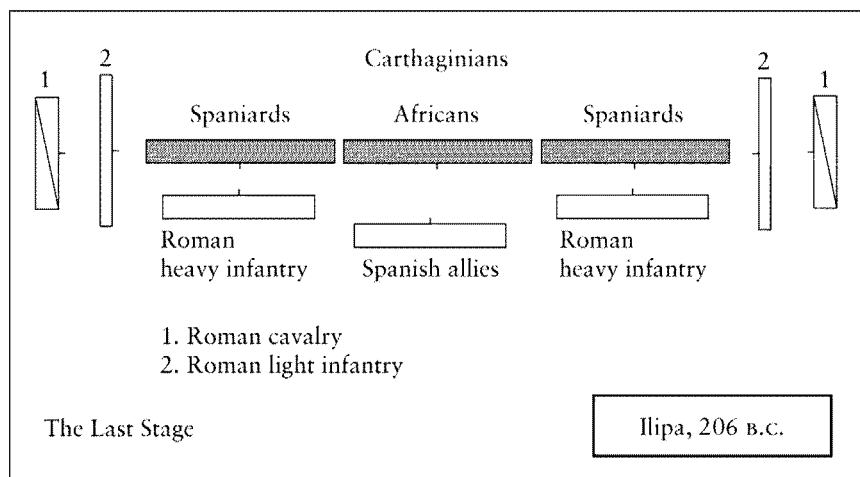


FIGURE 6.10

fore breakfast. He lined up his army in the order that had been used in the preceding days. But Scipio had reversed his battle order by placing the Spanish infantry in the center and his Roman foot troops at the wings (Figure 6.9).²³³ The Roman commander was in no hurry. He would wait until the sun was high in the sky and the heat of the day had started to take its toll on the weary and famished Carthaginian soldiers, who had neither drunk nor eaten before deploying.²³⁴ Scipio was paying the Carthaginians back for the torment that the Romans had experienced in the freezing conditions at Trebia. Now it was a summer day, and the heat would be as debilitating as the cold of that December day of 218 B.C.

When the time finally arrived for the main confrontation, Scipio recalled his cavalry and light infantry, which, filtering through the open ranks of the line infantry, regrouped in the back.²³⁵ A general advance followed, but about 700 meters from the enemy lines, Scipio ordered the Spaniards of the center to advance slowly and the Romans of the right wing, with their supporting velites and cavalry, to turn away from the battle line and then advance in a column formation. The next maneuver, while the center moved slowly in a refused gesture, was for the infantry to wheel left until they were again opposite the Spanish infantry and for the Roman cavalry to wheel right until they were in a position to attack the enemy on their flank (Figure 6.10).²³⁶ This maneuver was repeated on the Roman left.

The battle was decided there at the wings. The only element of discord in Scipio's masterful plan was the behavior of the Carthaginian elephants. They became frightened by the noise of the battle and stampeded, causing casualties among both the Romans and the Carthaginians.²³⁷ The battle

ended with a complete victory for the Roman army at the wings; the opposing centers never engaged each other. Hasdrubal, who had begun with a force of over 50,000, escaped with only 6,000 men.²³⁸

At Baecula, two years before, Scipio had experimented with the same formula, a weak center and two strong wings, in the manner of the great Hannibalic victories of Trebia and Cannae. Like the Romans in 218 and 216, the best Carthaginian forces would be pinned by a weak center at Ilipa in 206; actually, they were never able to come to blows with their enemy in Spain. Like Hannibal at Trebia, Scipio had used a stratagem. His army had been well rested and was fed while his cavalry forced the enemy to line up for battle before they had time to have their breakfast. At Trebia, Hannibal had induced the enemy to cross the icy river and to stand in the open under freezing conditions without any protection. At Ilipa, Scipio would use the heat of the day to cause a similar discomfort to the Carthaginian line. Yet, as H. H. Scullard argues, there were weaknesses in Scipio's plan. The Romans' elaborate maneuver at the wings must have given the Carthaginian cavalry a number of opportunities to attack.²³⁹ It is easier to understand the behavior of the Carthaginian center. If they had advanced and engaged the Roman center, manned by Spaniards, they could probably have pierced it and then could have turned on the Roman wings before their own wings were routed. But any movement of the Carthaginian center to engage the refused center of the Romans could have exposed the flanks. The deployment of the Romans in a column formation at the wings gave them two options—either to push forward and meet the opposing wings, as they did, or, if the Carthaginian center advanced, to turn part of the column against the flank of the enemy center, while the rest either remained in a refused gesture or engaged the enemy wings. Also, the unsettling effect caused by the heat and the dust of the battlefield on a summer day should not be forgotten. Those elements may have added further confusion to the battle scene and thus prevented the Carthaginians from becoming fully aware of Scipio's plan at the wings.

Scipio's victory in Spain was only a step toward total victory. Back in Rome after his Spanish successes, he finally convinced the Roman senate to carry the war to Africa. In 204, he sailed toward Carthaginian shores. He had 26,000 men with him, many of them veterans of the disaster at Cannae. Under normal conditions, they would have been dismissed by that time, but as a punishment for their defeat, Rome had left them under arms, stationed for years in Sicily. The men must have been seething with resentment and bent on revenge. Moreover, in Africa, Scipio could count on the aid of a friend, the Numidian prince Massinissa. At the time, Massinissa led only a few of his countrymen, but he would eventually play a key role in Scipio's final victory.

Once in Africa, Scipio further refined the skills that his master, whom he hoped to defeat one day, had shown at the expense of Scipio's father and

his people in Italy.²⁴⁰ The ambush, the use of stratagems, the exploitation of the psychological character of the adversary—all these became part of Scipio's portfolio of war. At the Tower of Agathocles in 204 B.C. and at the Burning of the Camps in 203, he once again repaid the Carthaginians for the ambushes at Trebia and Trasimene.

At the Tower of Agathocles, Scipio used to the Romans' advantage the skill of the same Numidians who had brought the Romans to their doom so many times in Italy. Scipio's ally Massinissa was ordered to attack a Numidian force serving the Carthaginians. He was also told, however, to flee after the first skirmishes and to entice the opponents across the place in which Scipio's cavalry was hiding. The plan worked perfectly, and the Numidian foe, surprised by the unexpected attack of the Romans lying in ambush, gave way, leaving about 1,000 dead on the spot and 2,000 more killed or taken prisoner during their flight.²⁴¹ The pattern was repeated a year later when the Roman army, besieging the Carthaginian city of Utica, was threatened in its turn by the arrival of a relief army of 30,000 infantry and 3,000 to 5,000 cavalry led by the Carthaginian Hasdrubal and the Numidian king Syphax, an enemy of Massinissa.²⁴² The Carthaginians were camped about 60 stades (10.8 kilometers) from Scipio in two camps positioned some 10 stades (1.80 kilometers) apart. During the halt in action caused by the short North African winter, Scipio began peace negotiations with Hasdrubal. His intent, however, was to find out as much as possible about the layout of the enemy's camps. When he was satisfied that he knew enough, he broke off the negotiations and began the siege of Utica again. That very night, he attacked Hasdrubal's camp, and at the same time, Massinissa and the Roman Laelius coordinated an assault on Syphax's camp. The action was a complete success (Figure 6.11). But it was a battle fought shortly after at the Great Plains that showed that Scipio, like his involuntary mentor who was still in Italy, had become a master of the art of war.

There was probably no need for Hasdrubal and Syphax to join battle with Scipio at the Great Plains. Hasdrubal might have achieved success simply by isolating the Romans who had ventured into the interior of the North African peninsula. Yet the Carthaginian superiority in forces—20,000 against the 12,000 to 15,000 Romans²⁴³—must have given him a sense of confidence.

The two armies lined up in their usual patterns, cavalry at the wings, infantry in the center, the Carthaginians in one long line typical of the phalanx, and the Romans in the three lines of *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii* (Figure 6.12). Scipio's plan was beautifully simple. His cavalry routed the enemy horsemen, whom they pursued; the *hastati* pinned the enemy line; and the *principes* and *triarii* turned into columns at the sides of the pinned enemies before attacking their flanks and destroying them (Figure 6.13).

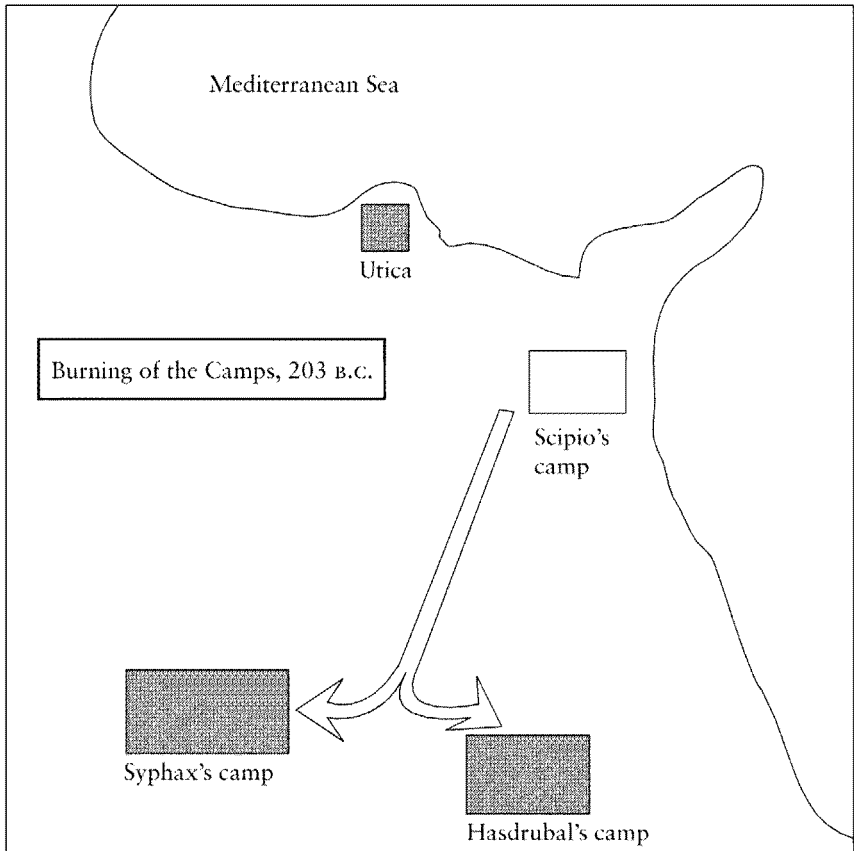


FIGURE 6.11

At Ilipa, the Roman center would theoretically have been in danger if the Carthaginian center had advanced to engage it. Moreover, although their maneuver had been very elaborate at Ilipa, the *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii* had fought in the normal pattern of each line supporting the one to its front. At the Great Plains, by contrast, not only had the enemy been rigidly pinned, but also, probably for the first time in Rome's military history, the *principes* and *triarii* had acted as a reserve with an offensive function, that is, they were not tied to the needs of the first line.²⁴⁴ The battle of the Great Plains was also important because it brought to an end the alliance between Carthage and most of the Numidians. Syphax was captured, and Massinissa soon after was able to establish control over his countrymen. From then on, most of the nimble small horses of the Numidians and their riders' fearless dash would be at the Romans' disposal. And after the Great

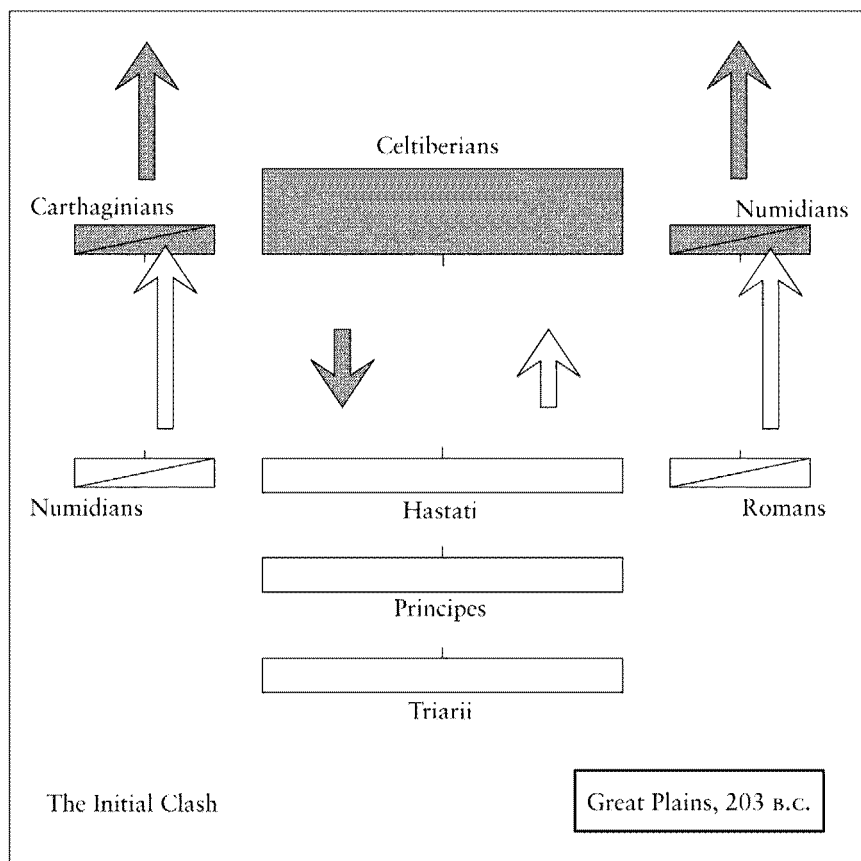


FIGURE 6.12

Plains battle, Carthage, now under direct threat from Roman arms, recalled Hannibal from Italy.

Hannibal landed at Hadrumetum, on the eastern side of the North African peninsula. At the news of his arrival, Scipio, who was on the northern side, moved toward the interior (Figure 6.14). The moment for the great confrontation had finally arrived, but Scipio was not yet ready to meet his master. He was short of cavalry because his ally Massinissa was not there. But it was clear that he, like Hannibal, was eager for battle, for Scipio left a path of destruction in a sector of the North African peninsula that was very important economically for Carthage. Consequently, the Carthaginian leaders felt that Hannibal had to give Scipio battle.²⁴⁵ Hannibal obeyed by advancing to intercept the Roman forces. Scipio, moving in a southwestern direction, and Hannibal, proceeding in a straight westerly di-

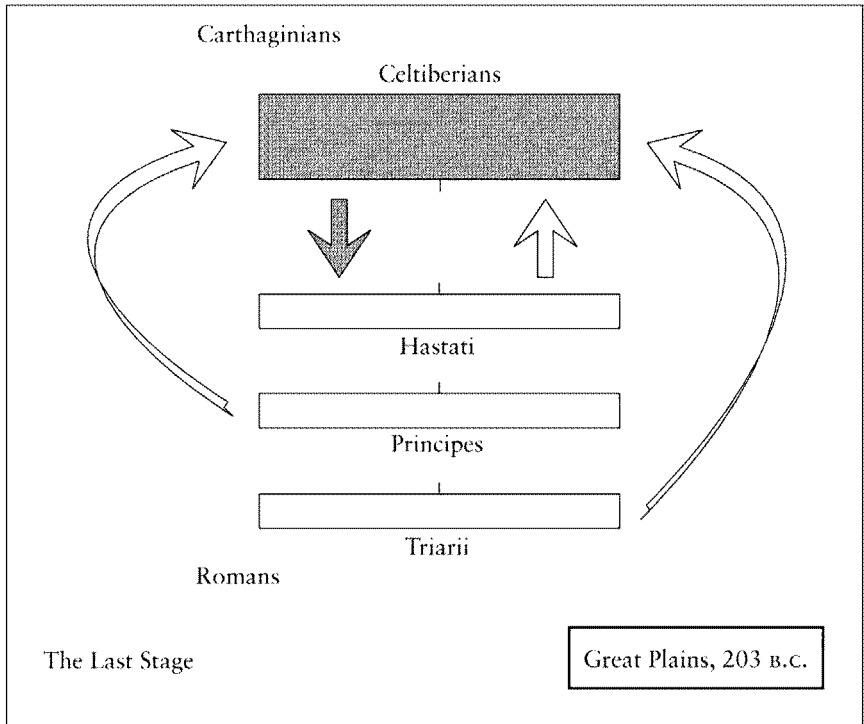


FIGURE 6.13

recession, finally approached one another. At about the same time, the Romans also captured three Carthaginian spies whom Hannibal had sent to find out about the Roman forces. The customary punishment would have been execution, but Scipio instead gave the spies a guided tour of the Roman camp and then set them free.²⁴⁶ The battle between the two forces, it could be said, started on that day. Letting the spies go was not just an example of Scipio's magnanimity, as Polybius suggests,²⁴⁷ but also a way to show the enemy that he had little cavalry and that he did not fear Hannibal. In reply, the Carthaginian leader asked for a personal meeting. Scipio agreed, but, like a man in control of the situation, he said that he would set the date and place for the encounter.²⁴⁸ He then waited until Massinissa finally joined him with 4,000 horsemen and 6,000 foot soldiers.²⁴⁹ Scipio could now wage battle against Hannibal in the open. His force was probably slightly inferior in infantry (he had about 34,000 footmen, counting the Numidian infantry, against 36,000 Carthaginians²⁵⁰), but it was finally superior in cavalry (with a little more than 6,000 troops against the enemy's 4,000 horsemen and 80 elephants).

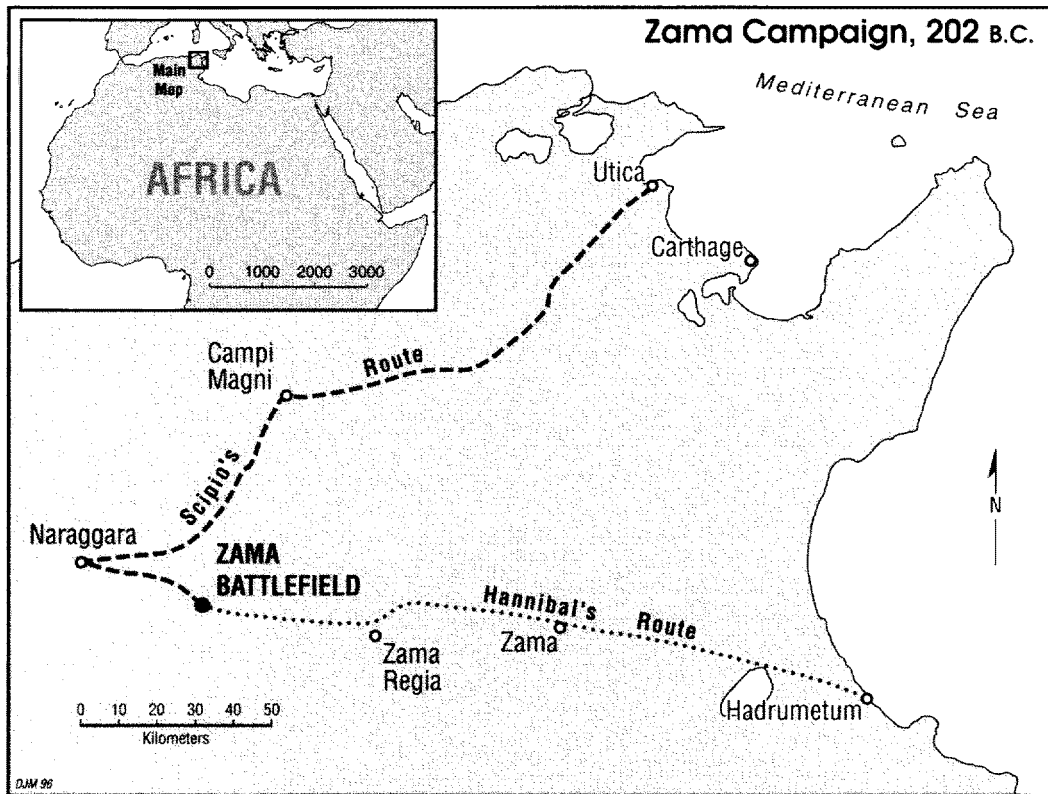


FIGURE 6.14

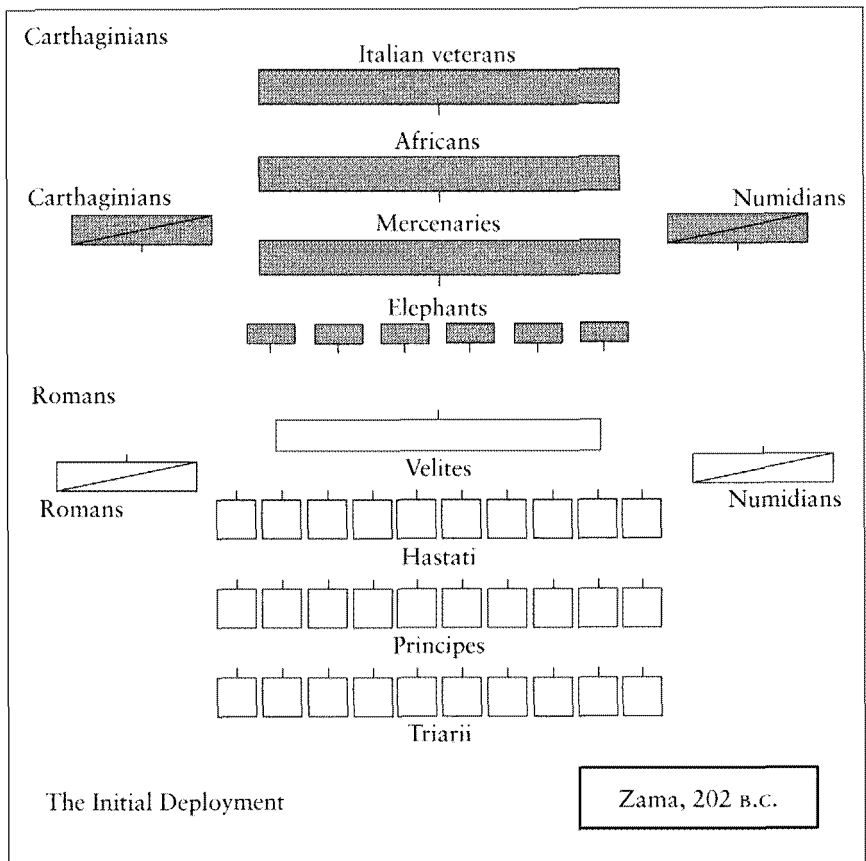


FIGURE 6.15

The two leaders rode across the field separating their armies and spoke through an interpreter.²⁵¹ The old master was now 45, blinded in one eye from wounds received in the Italian wars, and his pupil was 11 years his junior. Hannibal offered peace, but the terms he proposed were unacceptable to Scipio.²⁵² The final confrontation finally began on a day in October of the year 202 B.C.²⁵³ (Figure 6.15) almost exactly sixteen years after the October encounter at Ticinus between the invading Hannibal and Scipio's own father.

Scipio's speech to his troops was brief.²⁵⁴ He reminded them of their past battles, that defeat would mean "misery" and "disgrace" at home or worse if they fell into the hands of the Carthaginians, and that they were to fight not only to become "the unquestioned masters of Africa" but also for "the undisputed command and sovereignty of the rest of the world." They had only two objectives before them: "victory or death."²⁵⁵ If we accept Po-

lybius's presentation as accurate, Scipio never mentioned revenge to those who, like him, were the sons of the defeated soldiers of Ticinus, Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae, or who were the legionaries stationed in Sicily and the remnant of the defeated legions of Cannae. He did not have to suggest revenge, both because the memory of the past could have hardly been erased from their minds and because it might well have been counterproductive to mention the failures of the past to men whose confidence must at last have been buoyed by their string of successes in Africa. Meanwhile, in the opposing camp, Hannibal instead tried to keep the memory of the battles of years gone by alive in his soldiers' minds. He reminded his men that the father of their enemies' present general was the man they had defeated at Trebia,²⁵⁶ and he told the Carthaginian soldiers that they should remember their victories at Trasimene and at Cannae.²⁵⁷ They were men whose "strength was unbroken" and who "had never suffered defeat," he said, according to Polybius, but some of their foes were "the children" of those who had been defeated in the past and some "the wretched remnant of the legions he had so often vanquished and put to flight in Italy." Moreover, they could clearly see by scanning the battle line that the Romans were fewer in number, "just a fraction" of what the Carthaginians had faced in the past.²⁵⁸

Hannibal's plan was a subtle articulation of his underlying principle of adapting his forces to the enemy's strengths. The elephants of the first line were "to throw the enemy into confusion and break his ranks."²⁵⁹ The mercenaries of the first infantry line (Ligurians, Celts, Balearic Islanders, and Africans) were to perform a task similar to that of the Roman hastati—to engage the enemy so that the Romans might be "fatigued by their exertions . . . and their swords might also lose their edge owing to the great slaughter."²⁶⁰ According to Polybius, the function of the mercenaries was also to hem the untrustworthy second line, composed of Carthaginians and Libyans, between themselves and the veterans of the third line so that they would be compelled to fight.²⁶¹ However, if Hannibal was imitating the Roman battle order, the second line must also have had a task similar to that of their foes, the principes; that is, they would have to intervene if the first line gave way before the onslaught of the enemy. But it is clear that Hannibal placed most of his trust on the third line, "the troops he had brought over from Italy,"²⁶² who were "the most efficient and steadiest" of his soldiers; "anticipating and witnessing from afar what took place, they might with undiminished strength and spirit make use of their qualities at the proper time."²⁶³ Polybius does not elaborate, but it is reasonable to assume that the task of the third line was either to deliver a final blow if the Romans fought along traditional lines or to counter any outflanking maneuver if Scipio chose to repeat the tactics used at the battle of the Great Plains.

Polybius is correct in saying that Hannibal's plan was the best that he could devise with the forces available to him.²⁶⁴ But the battle of Zama lacked the

tactical finesse of Trebia and Cannae or of Ilipa and the Great Plains. It was more like a slugfest punctuated here and there by brilliant moves. But it could not be otherwise, for here the adversaries were not Longus or Varro or Hasdrubal, son of Gisco. Rather, they were Hannibal, still a master of the art of war, and his younger inadvertent pupil Scipio, who was facing him with a certitude spurred by the memory of past defeats and great victories and with the daring of a younger man against an aging opponent.

Hannibal's plan put Scipio's army at a disadvantage, especially since the Carthaginians could win the day in a slugfest if, as implied in Hannibal's speech to his troops, they had a greater number of men. Moreover, if Scipio did not become aware of Hannibal's intentions and if he engaged in the usual maneuver of outflanking the enemy, his troops might receive a very nasty surprise. There was, however, one element of discord in Hannibal's plan—the fact that, for the first time in his confrontations with the Romans, he was outnumbered in cavalry. But the cavalry played no major role at the outset. The Numidians of Hannibal's left wing took to flight as soon as they were charged by Massinissa's Numidians, who fought for the Romans. Soon after, the same thing took place on the right of the Carthaginian line when Hannibal's own cavalry also fled, pursued by the Roman horsemen.²⁶⁵ Yet the apparent ease with which the Roman forces succeeded on both wings suggests that the flight of the Carthaginian horsemen was probably pre-arranged. They did not engage the Romans in an infantry battle, as they had done on one wing at Cannae.²⁶⁶ Indeed, such an attempt might have caused an immediate disaster. Their numerical inferiority would likely have led to their defeat and to the opening of their infantry flanks to the Roman cavalry. Instead, after the first clash, they withdrew from the battlefield, followed by Romans and Numidians. This action took Scipio's cavalry away from the main action for a long time. It is clear from Polybius's narrative that the infantry had enough time to decide the battle before the horsemen arrived—if the terrain had not been encumbered with so many bodies.²⁶⁷ And even when the battle resumed, the foot soldiers fought for a while before the victorious Roman horsemen returned to dispatch the Carthaginian infantry.

The battle had begun on a disappointing note for Hannibal. Scipio, aware of the presence of the elephants, had deployed his maniples not in the customary checkerboard position but with one directly behind the other, thus leaving avenues between them. The attacking elephants were channeled along these lanes by the Roman light troops who had screened the front and probably killed in a manner reminiscent of the destruction of the scythed chariots at Gaugamela. Some of the elephants, scared by the sounds of trumpets and bugles, had stampeded their own Numidian cavalry on the left at the start of the battle, while others, instead of following their comrades along the lanes, had veered to the right, where they were subjected to javelin showers from the Roman cavalry before they left the field.²⁶⁸

With the elephants gone and the cavalry away, it was now time for the hastati and the Carthaginian mercenaries of the first line to move forward. The second lines of both armies also pushed ahead, while the veterans of Italy and presumably the Roman triarii remained well behind.²⁶⁹ The famous first rush of the mercenaries, most of them of Celtic origin, was displayed at Zama too because they initially seemed to have had a certain advantage, but soon the hastati counterattacked, forcing the mercenaries to retreat and seek refuge among the ranks of their second line.²⁷⁰

Polybius calls the men of the second line cowards because they did not advance to support the fleeing first line.²⁷¹ In fact, they even closed their ranks, forcing the mercenaries either to flee from the flanks of the line (which would have been difficult with the Romans at their back) or to forcefully cut their way through the ranks of their own men. It is likely that here, too, Polybius is not quite correct. It is more likely that the second line remained inactive either because of inexperience or because they thought the mercenaries should have held a little longer against the hastati. (That the second line troops were not cowards was proven by the way they fought later.²⁷²) The battle soon developed into a free-for-all. First, the mercenaries and Carthaginian troops cut each other down, and then, when the principes also came up to reinforce the hastati, there was a harsh struggle between the Romans and the second line of the Carthaginians.²⁷³

It appears that the Romans won this stage of the battle, for the survivors of the Carthaginian second line retreated toward the third. At that point, Hannibal ordered the veterans to level their spears to prevent the second line from filtering through the ranks of the third, either to prevent disruption of the close ranks or to compel the second line to fight a little longer.²⁷⁴ When the fight was renewed, the forces were more or less evenly matched.²⁷⁵

The struggle stopped momentarily because the condition of the battlefield, covered with "blood, slaughter, and dead bodies," made it impossible for the Romans to pursue the enemy.²⁷⁶ When the two sides came to grips with each other again, they had reconstituted their lines into single formations, the triarii along with the hastati and the principes for the Romans, the Italian veterans and probably the remnant of the other two lines for Hannibal.²⁷⁷

The Romans advanced over the slaughtered men on the battlefield and clashed with the Carthaginians. For a while, the outcome of the battle was in doubt, but in the end, the Numidian cavalry and the Roman horsemen returned, falling upon the rear of Hannibal's troops (Figure 6.16). The end came swiftly for the Carthaginians.²⁷⁸ The Romans lost 1,500 men, the Carthaginians had 20,000 dead and about the same number taken prisoners, but Hannibal escaped.²⁷⁹ He would live another 20 years, relentlessly pursued by the Romans, until he killed himself while in Bythinia to escape capture by the Romans.

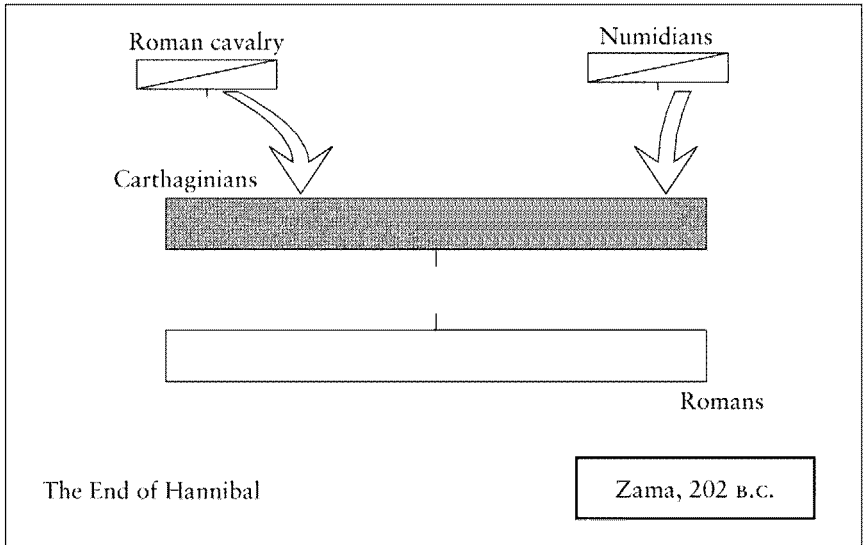


FIGURE 6.16

At last, the Romans and Scipio had paid Hannibal back for Cannae. There on the battlefield in the land of Africa came the end of the Great Wars and of the greatest danger Rome faced until the end of its empire. The battle at Zama was also a crucial defeat for the Hellenistic system of warfare. If Hannibal had synthesized the sophistication and the logical development of the art of war as expressed by Alexander, Scipio had certainly heralded the coming of a different system. He had combined the finesse of Hellenistic tactical skills with Roman toughness, resilience, and imitation without a sense of inferiority and without the shackles of tradition that must have hampered military development in the past, especially in the ancient Greek state. Moreover, the Romans' ability to recruit and master large numbers of people and their tendency to translate their conquests and their military achievements into laws that were ultimately acceptable to both conqueror and conquered ushered in a new period of military history. Although the Romans would have many confrontations in the future against the Hellenistic kingdoms, the military cycle that began in the lands of Classical Greece had finally come to a close at Zama. Roman successes, with their emphasis on the heavy infantry, might seem a throwback to the Greeks before the Macedonians. But in reality, they were not, for a number of reasons, including the innovation of the three lines, the flexibility of the manipular system, the established chain of command, and even the role of the light infantry, which at Baecula and at Zama, for instance, were particularly important. Except for the use of light infantry, these features also dif-

ferentiated the Roman tactical system from the Macedonians' and the Successors' art of war. And the professionalism that the Roman army would eventually accept was also alien to the other civilizations. To be sure, professional soldiers had existed before (most of Hannibal's army was made up of professionals) and would exist in the Hellenistic kingdoms, but the Roman professionals were also Roman citizens, not mercenaries. The fact was that Rome could draw on a pool of soldiers unavailable elsewhere. Other societies were never able to induce so many of their adult males to engage in war, sometimes serving in distant lands for many years. Roman men were encouraged to serve not only for demographic reasons but also because of the peculiarities of their social arrangements. The Romans were also equipped to dominate the world because they had an uncanny ability to integrate subject peoples into their political system. The pattern, of course, had emerged in the ancient Near East, but no people would be more enduring than the Romans in their conquests and in their ability to shape the rest of the world in their own image. Now, the time had come for war to assume the guise of eternal imperial power.

The Deification of the Military Leader

If in tactical terms the Second Punic War was a watershed between the Roman and the Greek and Hellenistic methods of waging war, in symbolic terms the conflict brought a new role to the military leader by merging Roman and Greek ideas. Alexander's Successors had strengthened the concept of divine kingship. And in the concept of the imperator, Scipio combined the idea of the military leader and the favorite of the gods with the Roman notions of religion. It was a concept that was used later by Marius and even more so by Sulla and Caesar before becoming a permanent symbol of the majesty of the Roman rulers during the imperial period.²⁸⁰

It is no surprise that Rome should prove a fertile breeding ground for such a concept during the Second Punic War. Carthage's defeat and Macedonia's collapse in the following century meant that the Mediterranean would fall under Roman control. It is also no surprise that Scipio would emerge as the archetype of the favorite of the gods. Pious and honest, he was the man who miraculously had saved Rome from disaster; he was the man who had finally defeated Hannibal.

Consciously and rather cynically, according to Polybius and Theodore Mommsen, or unconsciously and honestly, according to Roger Seguin and also in part Livy,²⁸¹ Scipio had been closely connected with the divine since his birth. When Scipio was an infant, the legend goes, people had seen a snake coiled around his body. Scipio had not killed it, as Heracles had done when he found two snakes in his crib, for Scipio's snake, like the snake present at Alexander's birth, was a benign symbol. It was an expression of the

favor of Jupiter, the father of the gods. Scipio's connection with Jupiter became closer and closer in the eyes of the Romans as time went by. They would marvel, for instance, at the fact that the guard dogs of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol would not bark during Scipio's frequent nightly walks to the temple.²⁸²

Scipio seems to have encouraged people to think that he was the spokesman of the gods, especially Jupiter. He attributed his frequent dreams foretelling the future to divine inspiration. Neptune, for example, showed him the way to conquer something that seemed unassailable—Nova Carthago in 209 B.C. When he landed in Africa near the *promontorium Pulchri*, Scipio thanked Apollo, normally identified with the adjective *Pulcher*, for the good omen. And after the Burning of the Two Camps, he addressed his thanks to Vulcan.²⁸³ But he normally saved his greatest appreciation for Jupiter. When Rome was in the midst of the deepest despair after Cannae, it was the young Scipio (he was 20 at the time) who stood up and forcefully swore his allegiance to the city. The god that he called to witness his commitment was none other than Jupiter: "I shall not desert the republic of the Roman people, so likewise shall I suffer no other Roman citizen to do so; if I wittingly speak false, may Jupiter Optimus Maximus utterly destroy me, my house, my family, my estate."²⁸⁴ When he was consul in 205, Scipio sacrificed 100 oxen at the Capitol to fulfill a vow made in Spain, an action that strengthened his relationship to Jupiter.²⁸⁵ The same year, the Saguntum ambassadors begged the senate to allow them to thank the father of the gods and to offer him a gold crown on the Capitol.²⁸⁶ Their action somehow suggested that Scipio's feat of arms in Spain had been the fulfillment of the wishes of the god.

Although Scipio's life was probably always surrounded by mystery, his popular deification began with his capture of Nova Carthago in 209. The city, surrounded by water, seemed impossible to take, but a local fisherman informed Scipio that a tongue of terrain linked the city to the coast during low tide. Scipio launched his assault on the basis of this information and took Nova Carthago by surprise. What was remarkable was Scipio's explanation of his success. Neptune himself, he said to his troops, had shown him how to capture the city.²⁸⁷ After his victory at Baecula in 208, he forgave the Spaniards who had fought at the side of the Carthaginians, and as a token of their gratitude, the Spaniards offered him the title of king since he was a young man with divine characteristics. Scipio refused the honor, preferring, he said, the title of imperator given to him by his soldiers.²⁸⁸ The reason is simple. At that time, the concept of the imperator had a religious connotation and was tied to the worship of Jupiter.²⁸⁹ It also was believed to have a religious aura that extended not just to Scipio but to his whole family. Scipio would use this for political ends with the help of the commoners, sometimes against the opposition of the senate. When the oriental goddess Cybele was

brought to Rome before Scipio's departure for Africa, the people pressed the senate to choose a member of Scipio's family, his cousin P. Cornelius Scipio (Nasica), to greet the goddess. Apparently, it was also public pressure that convinced the senate to grant Scipio permission to launch an attack in Africa. And when Scipio departed for Africa, the commoners performed the *supplicatio*, a ritual procession to the Roman temples, to ask the blessing of the gods for the departing soldiers. And again after Zama, the people pressured the city's fathers to allow Scipio to conduct the peace negotiations.²⁹⁰

The long history of Rome has more than one example of public pressure forcing the senate to adopt particular measures. In this sense, the people's support of Scipio was uncommon but not unusual. It was also not uncommon for a great leader to be given the status of hero. Among the examples that come to mind are Camillus in the fourth century B.C. and later Caesar and Augustus in the first century B.C. It was also not uncommon to tie a magistrate of the city with the gods. The Romans believed that the gods looked benevolently upon the city if the laws were obeyed and the gods were worshipped. By extension, the highest divine favor was given to the officers representing the state. What was different with Scipio was that he was not only regarded as a hero but he was also to a certain extent deified by being granted the title of imperator. Moreover, what had been temporary with other consuls became permanent with Scipio: His semidivine status did not end with the Second Punic War but continued throughout his lifetime and served as an example to future leaders to unite success in war with divine status in the title of imperator.

There are a few explanations for this development—the desperate nature of Roman life at the time of the Second Punic War, Scipio's great victory in Spain, his defeat of the most deadly enemy that Rome had ever known, the connection that the Romans made between political life and divine intervention, and the piety and honesty of Scipio himself. But probably what made a temporary attitude permanent was the confluence of two philosophical explanations of the role of the divinity in human affairs. One was the Roman tradition mentioned earlier; the other must have come from contact with the Hellenistic civilization and the work of the Greek Euhemerus, author of a fantasy novel called *Sacred Scripture*, written around 300 B.C. Euhemerus claimed that great conquerors and kings became gods at their death. Not surprisingly, the Latin translator of Euhemerus's work was Quintus Ennius (239–169 B.C.), the first poet of the time to mention the apotheosis of Scipio.²⁹¹ Like the way of arms, the divine symbolism of military leadership pointed firmly to the future. And as in many other practical and intellectual avenues, Rome had become not only the translator of things Greek but also an innovator by bringing subtle changes to the original ideas. It was a trend that later leaders exploited until it became a permanent feature of political and ideological power under the emperors.

Conclusion

The hoplite system was an institution perfectly suited to the poleis of ancient Greece. The ruling classes, which were normally the middling classes, staged, managed, and fought their own wars. Thus, the people who stood on the battle line also owned the land and collectively represented most of the wealth of their states. The identity of the citizen was inextricably linked to the identity of the soldier in this society, and the person who had the privilege of being a citizen of the polis also had the duty to defend or to advance the power of his city.

As Hanson has suggested, the hoplite clashes reflected the simplicity of agricultural life. They were short, lasting at most a day. They were periodical like the seasons, occurring before or after the harvest. And they were economical, with one major battle deciding the issue at hand; next year, the citizen-soldier would again bear arms, but for the moment, the contested issue was resolved. The simplicity of the conflict was also reflected in the warrior himself and in the development of the battle. The soldier had little to learn before lining up for combat. He did not have to spend endless hours mastering the complexity of bow or sling, training for the fits and starts of javelin-throwing, or riding a horse. All he needed was a strong constitution (which most people whose main activity was agriculture already possessed) and most of all courage and a sense of duty. But there could be shortcuts taken even in the matter of physical strength. After all, as Hippocrates notes, the easterners that both Greeks and Macedonians defeated were known to be tall and have powerful bodies. But the hoplite's main asset was that he fought as a member of a unit, while his adversary fought as an individual. The hoplite's safety and power were tied to the safety and power of the line. This explains his enormous shield, held rigidly, the thoroughness of his armor, and the simplicity of his weapons—the spear or, at times, the sword.

Battle itself followed an uncomplicated, rigid canon, which normally did not entail complex maneuvers or training unless, like the Spartans, one made a continuous business of war. The two armies simply marched against each other, with the aggressor taunting the enemy by threatening to devastate his land. Light infantry opened the clash and then disappeared; the cavalry, if present, was kept at the margin of the battle to protect the flanks. What decided the conflict was the phalanx—hoplites lined up in

long, continuous lines, normally thinly spread in depth, with 4 to 12 ranks. The opposing phalanxes would march slowly against each other and then, shouting their war cry, run the last few meters and clash shield to shield, the spear seeking the throat or the shoulders or the groin of the opponent. Shoving and slaughtering continued until one side gave up; then the dark task of killing those left behind or caught in the rear began. Afterward, the grim business of stripping the dead of their possessions continued until the victorious army went back to its polis to prepare for the harvest and for the inevitable business of war next year.

The Great Persian Wars must have strengthened the belief that this system of war-making was ideal. After all, had not the hoplites defeated the soldiers of the greatest empire the world had known? The Peloponnesian War, however, began to undermine this belief. In this conflict, the hoplite system was challenged both tactically and socially. The fields of battle were no longer a few kilometers from the city walls; no longer did all soldiers have a personal stake in the survival of the city; and the opposing sides did not necessarily fight on the level ground suited to the hoplite and were not limited to the use of spear, sword, and large shield in their clashes. The introduction of mercenaries in an increasingly larger scale also shook the foundation of the hoplite system, whether the mercenaries jostled as hoplites or as light soldiers. Their background and sometimes their style of fighting defied many of the conventions upon which the hoplite system was based. They had no property or women or children to defend and thus no stake in the society for which they were fighting. What was in jeopardy was their pay and their lives. Despite the fact that they were essential in fighting wars away from the polis or that they were more efficient than hoplites in different terrains (as at Sphacteria) or in combination with hoplites (as against the Spartan *mora*) near Corinth, the ruling classes of the Greek poleis did not relent in their conviction that they had still to rely on a system where the soldier was also the citizen. This belief was not relinquished even in Athens during the Peloponnesian War, in spite of its reluctance to meet Sparta in pitched battles, as had been customary in the past. Actually, the reliance of Athens on the navy was considered not a strength but a symptom of decay. It is no surprise, then, that toward the end of the classical age, Greece would still settle its account on the battlefield with two great hoplite encounters—Leuctra in 371 and Mantinea in 362 B.C.

Leuctra and Mantinea reflected the past and, at the same time, pointed to the future. At Leuctra, the cavalry also played an important role; at Mantinea, Epaminondas experimented with the use of combined arms. Moreover, he brought forth the first radical innovation to the hoplite system. He switched the edge of attack from the right to the left wing, pitting strength against strength and deployed in that type of formation, the oblique, that

would become very popular on many future battlefields. It is also no surprise that Epaminondas's heirs were not from Hellas but from a state at the periphery, Macedonia. Epaminondas's ideas required a new social structure to be implemented, for the identity of the citizen-soldier had been eroded but not completely destroyed in the rest of Greece. Macedonia was different in many ways—having more resources, an appreciation of the use of various types of soldiers, a strong aristocracy and a king, and continuous warfare with neighbors who fought in ways different from the hoplites. Moreover, the rest of the ethnic Macedonians, even from the lower classes, continued to reap some of the rewards of military power.

A state like Macedonia, ruled by a king supported by the aristocracy, was a necessity for the supremacy of the cavalry, which had been relegated to minor roles in other Greek states. War became the business not of the middling classes only but also of the king and his aristocracy. The Macedonians parceled the onus and the benefits of warfare first according to class, then ethnic group, and finally the type of alliance or terms of service. The army and the battlefield were revolutionized. The soldiers who went with Alexander to conquer the Persian Empire were of a different breed than those of the hoplite armies—not just heavy infantry but a combination of all troop types. Even more important than this was the fact that the cavalry took pride of place on the battlefield. It is wrong, however, to look at Alexander's victories as triumphs of the horsemen with the footmen playing only an ancillary role. In reality, Alexander won because of the subtle interplay of horseman and phalangite and a rewriting of the role of light infantry. His greatest asset was his ability to combine arms in a manner that probably no other commander was able to do until the eighteenth century. Moreover, the streamlining of the logistical apparatus meant that soldiers could march more quickly than ever before.

The army that Alexander took to Asia did not become the norm. The proportion of 1 horseman to every 6 foot soldiers was an oddity, demanded by the special need of enhanced mobility and the specific goal of conquering a large empire. The Successor states could field armies much larger than hoplite Greece, yet they could not or would not keep so many horsemen. The cavalry kept its importance, but its proportion in relation to the infantry was much more modest—for example, probably about 2 horsemen to 23 footmen at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C.

The army of Republican Rome in the third century through most of the second century B.C. was quite different from both classical Greece and the Hellenistic states of the Successors of Alexander. Although originally probably quite similar to Greek hoplite armies, it had become unlike them by the time of the Second Punic War. But Rome had not been an overnight sensation. From her foundation around the middle of the eighth century B.C.,

according to tradition, it took the Romans about five hundred years, until the end of the third century, to acquire supremacy in Italy and the western Mediterranean.

The Roman armies too were made up of citizens, whose role on the battlefield was based on their economic status. The poor or the noncitizen were excluded except in emergencies. But the aristocracy was not pushed to the margin of the battlefield as it was in classical Greece; it kept playing a leading role, although not like that of the cavalry of Macedonia and probably most of the Successor states. If the Roman aristocrats declared, managed, and led the wars, on the battlefield they fought side by side with the footmen, for the footmen remained the core of the Roman army. It could not be otherwise. War was an essential element of Roman society at all levels: It was an avenue to political, social, and economic success for the aristocracy; it was a road to economic gain and possibly social mobility for the commoners; and it was the psychological safety valve of institutionalized brutality.

There was no internal or external section of the Roman state where war did not play a crucial role. The Roman quest for war is better seen as a social organism with a life of its own. It was part and parcel of patrician and commoner life, as mentioned above; it reiterated the values of the community; it was probably the agent that tied the rest of the Italic people to Rome. While assuring the continued hegemony of the aristocracy of each conquered Italic state, Rome garnered the support of the other sectors of Italic people by making them partners in the conquest of the still independent states. This meant that the Republican armies of the third century were only partially Roman. Usually, allies provided about 50 percent of the manpower. Rome founded new colonies both for the allies and for the poorer Roman citizens in the newly conquered territories. It was a clever device that relieved the stress of the acquisition of new territories and slaves by the upper classes and thus the impoverishment of both the Roman and the allied agricultural classes. Potential troublemakers were appeased by settling them in colonies far from the center. The distance also considerably lessened the political threat against the aristocracy, which reaped most of the economic advantages from warfare.

War in Rome was not just dissimilar in its internal structure from Greek and Macedonian war but also quite different on the battlefield. In appearance, it seemed like another phalanx, but a phalanx with joints, as Delbrück said long ago. The weapons and deployment of the legion were quite unlike those that had existed before and those still used elsewhere in the Mediterranean and the East at the time. The Roman battlefield seemed a reflection of the legal apparatus of Roman life. There were four lines instead of one. The light infantry, velites, screened the rest and fought like light infantry should have done in classical Greece. Then there were three lines of

heavy soldiers: the first, the hastati, with the task of disordering the enemy line; the second, the principes, with the goal of breaking the enemy; and the third, the triarii, there to protect the rest if the enemy remained unbeaten or gained the upper hand. At the same time, cavalry, normally more numerous than in classical Greece and apparently comparable in strength to Hellenistic armies such as those at Cynoscephalae, protected the flanks. It was not just a matter of deployment; even more important were the weapons. The shield, still large and probably heavier than the hoplite shield but oval instead of round, was a weapon of offense, not just defense. The spears, except for those of the triarii, had become javelins, thrown just before contact. The hand-to-hand battle was fought with a terrifying new weapon, a short, pointed sword whose function was not just to cut but also to stab and thus kill or maim with one hit only.

The Romans also brought another novelty to the unwritten laws of war. It had been the custom of classical Greece to decide the war with one major battle, a practice partially adopted by the Hellenistic states. Rome turned this unwritten habit inside out. Not one, not two, not even three major defeats could bring Rome to bay during the Second Punic War. It was not just that Rome was able to recruit a seemingly endless supply of young men for the grim task of the battlefield; it was also a matter of a ruthless new mental outlook, in a state that was able to absorb 16 percent casualties among its adult males and still keep fighting. The real strength of the Roman Republic was there—the ability to remain at war until the enemy was exhausted, asked for a humiliating peace, or was utterly destroyed.

This book has dwelled to a great extent on the West-East confrontation, whether between Greeks or Macedonians against Persia or Rome against Carthage. In hindsight, the victory of the West seems inevitable, but insisting on its certainty would be inaccurate. The victory of the West was never a certainty, even with Alexander. One defeat would have been enough to destroy the Macedonian war effort. If the wings of the Persian line had lasted a little longer at Marathon, both the Athenians and the Plataeans would have been destroyed. Another attack at Salamis probably would have ended the threat of the Greek navy. A more logical strategic approach could have brought Rome to its knees during the Second Punic War. Yet the question still remains: Why did the West win? In the case of the Great Persian Wars, a combination of strategic and tactical mistakes and the Greeks' desperate defense of their homeland may have been among the crucial factors. In the case of Alexander, certainly the inability of Darius and his generals to provide a solution to the Macedonian manipulation of the battlefield may explain part of Alexander's success. Yet, at least in that case, one should not dismiss the solidarity of the Macedonian army against a vast but obviously weak empire with little sense of loyalty to Darius and his family. Rome, on the other hand, had no alternative once Hannibal arrived in Italy.

Defeat meant humiliation and servitude. Carthage also lost because her successful commercial empire was unable to sustain a very long war effort against a frugal, violent, and confident society that, starting from the poor hills of Rome, had slowly but steadily expanded its territories and increased its wealth. The partners of success in the Roman Republic included everybody—aristocrats, commoners, even non-Romans—except for people with long-standing grievances against the state, such as the Samnites.

It was inevitable that war should reflect all the main values of the warring societies in its symbolism and propaganda. What is remarkable at least to modern eyes, which look at armed conflicts as a deviant behavior, is that war was not just a normal feature of ancient life but also the element that best defined society. Greeks couched their fight against Persia in terms that restated their most cherished value—freedom. They went to the fields of Marathon, they stood at Thermopylae, and they waited with confidence in their hearts at Salamis because they had to preserve their freedom—and not just the freedom of a single polis, Athens or Sparta, but the freedom of the whole of Hellas against the oppressors from across the sea. The Greeks were men used to sacrifice, to a frugal life, to obedience to the gods, to the collectivity; the Persians, the Greeks maintained, were people rendered soft by wealth, debauchery, and servitude; they did not obey the gods; when they fought, they sought their individual survival, not the safety of the group. The Greeks were servants to no one; in Persia, even the Great King was in the hands of sinister eunuchs and preying women. The Greeks were strong, powerful, unbeatable, and male; the Persians were weak, enticing, and female, and their land and riches were to be taken and raped by the Greeks. This was a message that Alexander too would convey to his troops during his expedition: We must kill Darius, but we must keep his land and the people unscathed because their wealth will become ours. The Romans were portrayed as honest, straightforward souls who worked the land, cherished simple values; they were just and pious, especially in the figures of Quintus Maximus and Scipio; the Carthaginians, by contrast, were depicted as devious and untrustworthy, worshipping a cannibalistic god, making a living out of commerce and not out of the land, and hiring mercenaries to fight their own wars.

Disparagement of the losers and heroization of the winners did not only occur among people who were ethnically different, such as Greeks and Persians or Romans and Carthaginians. The inherent symbolism found application between the same ethnic groups or within the same polis as well. Even when war was profitable because of elements other than the hoplites, such as the Athenian navy at Salamis or during the Peloponnesian War, the hoplite still reflected the main values of the society, and the navy was regarded with a certain embarrassment or even as an element of decay. At Leuctra, the Thebans were believed to be the favorite of the gods, with even

Heracles fighting on their side; the Spartans would lose because some of their soldiers had desecrated the battlefield.

The conquest of the East brought forth a new notion of kingship, first experimented with, albeit without much success, by Alexander, then adopted by some of his Successors, and finally embraced by the Romans during the Second Punic War. The notion implied not only that the ruler was a favorite of the gods but also that he became divine during his tenure in office. Alexander's Macedonians resisted the tendency to give divine honors to their leader, and even later the most important Western thinker on the subject, Euhemerus, extended the notion only to kings and great heroes once they had died. What makes Scipio different is that he combined two trends into the concept of *imperator*, which at that time had a religious meaning. Roman archaic religion maintained that the republic and its highest magistrates during their tenure in office were blessed by the gods if the state remained just and pious. When Scipio received the title of *imperator* from his soldiers in Spain, he united in a living human being both the temporary concept of divinity embodied in his role as a high republican magistrate and also Euhemerus's permanent notion of the divine nature of leadership. Scipio's apotheosis set the trend for the future, which would be developed first with Marius and especially Sulla and then with Julius Caesar, Augustus, and the later emperors.

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Glossary

- bía.** A Greek term meaning violent force. It refers to the brutality used by the Romans to strike terror in their enemies' hearts.
- centurion.** Junior officer of the Roman army. There were 2 centurions per maniple, the basic tactical unit of the legion. Each maniple also had 2 rear commanders (*optiones*).
- cleruch.** Peasant-soldier of Egypt under the Successor dynasty of the Ptolemies. The cleruch was given a plot of land for his military service. The grant varied from soldier to soldier: 5 to 20 *arourai* (1 *aroura* was equivalent to about two-thirds of an acre) for native Egyptians and 20 to 100 *arourai* for Greek mercenary soldiers.
- deme.** Village. There were 140 demes in Attica.
- enomotia.** Basic tactical unit of the Spartan army.
- equites.** Roman cavalrymen.
- hastati.** Heavy infantrymen of the first of three lines of the Roman legion. Their name derives from *hasta* (a thrusting spear), but they abandoned the spear in favor of javelins (*pila*) and swords by the time of the Second Punic War.
- helot.** Spartan serf, used on rare occasions as a soldier.
- hippeis.** Normally, a term referring to cavalry but also used to refer to the elite infantry unit of the Spartan army.
- homoioi.** Spartan citizens. Literally, the term means "equals."
- hoplite.** Heavy infantry soldier, the core of the Greek armies of the classical period.
- hoplon.** Weapon. Usually, the term refers to the hoplite's round, concave shield.
- hypaspist.** A type of infantryman of the Macedonian army. It is thought that he was more mobile than the phalangites and that he fought with a shorter pike or a spear. Hypaspists probably made up one of the elite units of the army.
- imperator.** A title granted to a victorious Roman commander. Originally, the title had a religious meaning. Scipio Africanus was granted the title during his campaign in Spain in the later stages of the Second Punic War.
- maniple.** Basic fighting unit of the Roman legion. There were 30 maniples per legion. The maniples of the hastati and principes included 120 men, and the maniples of the triarii had 60 men. Each maniple was composed of 2 centuries.
- Medizing Greeks.** Greeks who sided with the Persians during the Great Wars.
- mora.** The largest unit of the Spartan army.
- othismos.** A term that refers to the pushing action of the hoplites during a battle.
- peltast.** Light troops. Their name derives from *pelte*, the name of their shield.
- perioeci.** Inhabitants of the Spartan state who had no rights of citizenship. They were used in emergencies as soldiers.
- phalangite.** Heavy infantryman of the Macedonian phalanx who used a pike (*sarissa*) as his main weapon.
- pilum.** Javelin used by the Roman hastati and principes.

polemarch. Senior commander of a Greek army.

polis. Greek city-state.

principes. Heavy infantrymen of the second line of the Roman legion.

prodromoi. Macedonian cavalrymen, also called scouts or lancers.

sarissa. Pike of the Macedonian phalangites.

strategos. General, a commander in a Greek army.

triarii. Heavy infantrymen of the third line of the Roman legion. Unlike the hastati and the principes, who were armed with javelins (*pila*), the triarii retained the spear (*hasta*) as their main weapon.

trireme. Warship.

velites. Light infantry of the Roman legion.

Abbreviations

Aeschylus	Aeschylus. <i>Persae</i> , trans. A. J. Podlecki (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970)
Arrian	Arrian. <i>Anabasis Alexandri</i> , trans. P. Brunt (Vol. 1) and E. I. Robson (Vol. 2) (Loeb Classical Library, 1954)
Diodorus	Diodorus Siculus. <i>Library of History</i> , trans. C. H. Oldfather (Loeb Classical Library, 1946), Vol. 4
Herodotus	Herodotus, trans. A. D. Godley (Loeb Classical Library, 1946–1950), Vols. 3, 4
Livy	Livy, trans. B. O. Foster, F. G. Moore, R. M. Feer (Loeb Classical Library, 1939–1959)
<i>Lyra Graeca</i>	<i>Lyra Graeca</i> , trans. J. M. Edmonds (Loeb Classical Library, 1958)
Pausanias	Pausanias. <i>Description of Greece</i> , trans. W.H.S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod (Loeb Classical Library, 1933–1960)
Plutarch	Plutarch. <i>Lives</i> , trans. B. Perrin (Loeb Classical Library, 1914–1954)
Polybius	Polybius. <i>The Histories</i> , trans. W. R. Paton (Loeb Classical Library, 1920–1927)
Thucydides	Thucydides. <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i> , trans. C. F. Smith (Loeb Classical Library, 1920)
Xenophon, <i>Constitution</i>	Xenophon. <i>Scripta minora</i> , “Constitution of the Lacedaemonians,” trans. G. W. Bowersock (Loeb Classical Library, 1946)
Xenophon, <i>Cyropaedia</i>	Xenophon. <i>Cyropaedia</i> , trans. W. Miller (Loeb Classical Library, 1914)
Xenophon, <i>Hellenica</i>	Xenophon. <i>Hellenica</i> , trans. C. L. Brownson (Loeb Classical Library, 1921)
Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia</i>	Xenophon. <i>Memorabilia and Oeconomicus</i> , trans. E. C. Marchant (Loeb Classical Library, 1965)

Notes

Introduction

1. H. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War Within the Framework of Political History*. Vol. 1: *Antiquity*, trans. W. J. Renfro Jr. (Westport, Conn., 1975), p. 275.

2. W. H. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979).

3. E. Gabba, "Riflessione sulla società romana fra il III e il II secolo a.C.," *Athenaeum*, n.s. 64 (1986): 472–474; S. Oakley, "The Roman Conquest of Italy," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Roman World* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 9–37; J. Patterson, "Military Organization and Social Change in the Later Roman Republic," in *ibid.*, pp. 92–112.

4. Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters, Places*, chapter 12, sections 7–16.

5. E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978), p. 56.

6. E. Hall, "Asia Unmanned: Images of Victory in Classical Athens," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), pp. 108–133.

7. Diodorus Siculus XV.52; Plutarch, *Pelopidas*, 20; Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.7.

8. J. P. Baldson, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," *Historia* 1 (1950): 371–382.

9. Cf. Maria Jaczynowska, "La genesi repubblicana del culto imperiale: Da Scipione l'Africano a Giulio Cesare," *Athenaeum*, n.s. 63 (1985): 285–295; Roger Seguin, "La religion de Scipion l'Africain," *Latomus* 33 (1974): 3–21; Gabba, "P. Cornelio Scipione Africano e la leggenda," *Athenaeum*, n.s. 53 (1975): 3–17.

Chapter One

1. The categorization of the wars is mainly from J. Harmand, *La guerre antique de Sumer à Rome* (Vendôme, 1973), pp. 11–38. Cf. V. Ilari, *Guerra e diritto nel mondo antico*, pt. 1, *Guerra e diritto nel mondo greco-ellenistico fino al III secolo* (Milan, 1980), pp. 46–48, who argues for a different categorization and lists six types of war. He agrees with Harmand on raids (he calls them "seasonal war") and on civil, imperialistic, and ethnic wars but adds agonistic wars, conflicts decided by duels, and ritual confrontations such as the "pogroms" (Ilari's definition) waged by young Spartans against the helots.

2. Y. Garlan, *War in the Ancient World: A Social History*, trans. J. Lloyd (London, 1975; 1st French ed. 1972), p. 78.

3. Attica had a population of about 120,000 people in 432 B.C. The Peloponnese of the fifth century numbered about 900,000, but some 300,000 to 350,000 of

them were helots, that is, nonfree individuals. See K. J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-romischen Welt* (Leipzig, 1886), as reported in C. Nicolet et al., *Rome et la conquête du monde méditerranéen 264–27 avant d.-c.*, vol. 1, *Les structures de l'Italie romaine*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1979; 1st ed. 1977), p. 84.

4. A. I. Despotopoulos, in G. Phylactopoulos, ed., *History of the Hellenic World*, vol. 2, *The Archaic Period* (Athens, 1975; 1st ed. 1971), p. 314.

5. J. Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony, 371–362 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1980).

6. N.G.L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.* (Oxford, 1982; 1st ed. 1959), pp. 568–569.

7. Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 78.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–93.

9. *Ibid.*

10. See the discussions on “the chariot in Homer” and “the geometric period” in P.A.L. Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare: Horsemen and Chariots in the Homeric and Archaic Age* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 7–39. Cf. Hans Van Wees, “The Homeric Way of War: *The Iliad* and the Hoplite Phalanx,” *Greece and Rome* 41 (1994): 9–14.

11. On this, see V. D. Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (New York, 1995), pp. 234–237. Recently, several scholars have attempted to reassess the role of the cavalry: L. J. Worley, *Hippeis: The Cavalry of Ancient Greece* (Boulder, 1994); I. G. Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece: A Social and Military History with Particular Reference to Athens* (Oxford, 1993); G. R. Bugh, *The Horsemen of Athens* (Princeton, 1988). See also Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare*, pp. 84–195; J. K. Anderson, *Ancient Greek Horsemanship* (Berkeley, 1979; 1st ed. 1961).

12. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 223.

13. Plutarch, *Moralia* 242.16.

14. *Ibid.*, 220.a.1.

15. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, pp. 297–299.

16. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1 (Berkeley, 1971), p. 150. See also P. H. Blyth, “The Structure of a Hoplite Shield in the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco,” *Bollettino dei musei e gallerie pontificie* 3 (1982): 5–21.

17. J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley, 1970), pp. 14–20.

18. J. Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World* (New York, 1980), p. 35.

19. P. Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981), p. 58.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 37.

22. Aeschylus, *Persae* 85 (hereafter Aeschylus).

23. *Ibid.*, 147–149.

24. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 37.

25. M. M. Markle, “Macedonian Arms and Tactics Under Alexander the Great,” in B. Barr-Sharrar and E. N. Borza, eds., *Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times* (Washington, D.C., 1982), p. 92.

26. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 37, says visual evidence indicates that it could also be thrown if the hoplite was at a higher level than his target.

27. One of the key representations of the hoplite is on the Chigi Vase, found in Tuscany and now located in the Etruscan Museum at Villa Giulia in Rome. The vase shows the spear held in both an overarm and an underarm position; the underarm position seems to have been used only when the hoplite was advancing, not when he was in contact with the enemy.

28. Cf. A. M. Snodgrass, "The Hoplite Reform and History," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 85 (1965): 110–122; A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (Ithaca, 1967), pp. 48–88; Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare*, pp. 71–74, 151–155.

29. Cf. H. L. Lorimer, "The Hoplite Phalanx with Special Reference to the Poems of Archilochus and Tyrtaeus," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 42 (1947): 76–138; M. Detienne, "La phalange: Problèmes et controverses," in J. P. Vernant, ed., *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1968), pp. 119–142; P. Cartledge, "Hoplites and Heroes: Sparta's Contribution to the Technique of Ancient Warfare," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 97 (1977): 11–28.

30. Van Wees, "The Homeric Way of War: *The Iliad* and the Hoplite Phalanx," p. 148. Cf. Van Wees with J. Latacz, *Kampfparänese, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos und Tyrtaios* (Munich, 1977).

31. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 229 (Hanson's italics).

32. Ibid., pp. 221–244. Cf. J-P. Vernant's article "The Class Struggle," in his *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1988), pp. 11–28. The French version of the article was first published in *Eirene, Studia Graeca et Latina* 4 (1965): 5–19.

33. Polybius V.21.6.

34. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VII.5.8.

35. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4 (Berkeley, 1985), p. 92.

36. Aristotle, *Politica* V.2.12.

37. Herodotus VII.9.

38. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, pp. 84–85.

39. Aeschylus 240.

40. Thucydides V.68.

41. Xenophon, *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* XI.4.

42. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, p. 134.

43. Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, p. 37.

44. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, pp. 135–137.

45. Ibid., p. 137.

46. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 2 (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 190–207.

47. Herodotus VI.111.

48. Ibid., IX.58–65.

49. Ibid., VI.111.

50. Ibid., IX.58–65.

51. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III.1.8. Cf. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 95–96.

52. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, p. 59.

53. Pausanias I.32.3.

54. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, p. 51.

55. Ibid., pp. 51–54.

56. Arrian, *Tactica* III.1.

57. Thucydides V.71.1.

58. Herodotus VI.112.

59. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 275.

60. Tyrtaeus 11, lines 21–25, in M. Dillon and L. Garland, eds. and trans., *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates c. 800–399 B.C.* (London, 1994), p. 151.

61. On this, see G. L. Cawkwell, "Orthodoxy and Hoplites," *Classical Quarterly* 39 (1989): 375–389; P. Krentz, "The Nature of Hoplite Battle," *Classical Antiquity* 4 (1985): 50–61; P. Krentz, "Casualties in Hoplite Battles," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 26 (1985): 13–20.

62. Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, p. 37; Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 262; R. D. Luginbill, "Othismos: The Importance of the Mass-Shove in Hoplite Warfare," *Phoenix* 48 (1994): 51–61; A. J. Holladay, "Hoplites and Heresies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982): 94–103; J. K. Anderson, "Hoplites and Heresies: A Note," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 152; J. Buckler, "Epameinondas and the EMBOLON," *Phoenix* 39 (1985): 134–143; J. F. Lazenby, "The Killing Zone," in V. D. Hanson, ed., *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London, 1991), pp. 87–109; Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, pp. 65–73.

63. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, pp. 55ff.

64. Cf. Luginbill, "Othismos: The Importance of the Mass-Shove in Hoplite Warfare," pp. 51–52.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–61.

66. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, pp. 74–76.

67. W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 1 (Berkeley, 1965), p. 145.

68. On this, see Chapter 5.

69. Herodotus VI.113.

70. *Ibid.*, VI.114.

71. *Ibid.*, VI.117.

72. N.G.L. Hammond, "Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 59–60.

73. Krentz, "Casualties in Hoplite Battles," pp. 19–20.

74. Polybius XXXV.1.2.

75. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, p. 92.

76. On this, see Chapter 6.

77. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.1.6.

78. *Ibid.*, 3.2.1.

79. *Ibid.*, 3.1.11.

80. *Ibid.*, 3.2.1.

81. *Ibid.*, 3.2.3.

82. *Ibid.*, 3.1.6.

83. Garlan, *War in the Ancient World*, pp. 145–150.

84. Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, p. 69.

85. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* II.6–9. Cf. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 99.

86. For the Athenian strategoi, see Garlan, *War in the Ancient World*, pp. 154–155.

87. For an example of the situation, see Xenophon, *Anabasis* III.1.1.46.
88. Herodotus VII.229.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., VII.231.
91. Ibid., VII.232.
92. Ibid., VII.229.
93. Ibid.
94. Herodotus seems to condemn Aristodemus because, in his opinion, Aristodemus should have acted as Eurytus did. He also offers a different explanation of Aristodemus's action; see Herodotus VII.230.
95. J. de Romilly, "La notion de 'classes moyennes' dans l'Athènes du Ve s. av. J. C.," *Revue des études grecques* 100 (1987): 1-17.
96. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
97. Ibid., p. 15.
98. Euripides, *Suppliques*, lines 238-245 (my translation).
99. Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare*, pp. 74-75.
100. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 233.
101. Detienne, "La phalange: Problèmes et controverses," pp. 123-124.
102. On this, see Hanson, *The Other Greeks*. This interpretation, however, probably does not apply to the Spartan state.
103. This is Aristides' viewpoint, expressed in his *Panathenaicus*. See A. Santosuosso, "Leonardo Bruni Revisited: Hans Baron's Thesis on the Influence of the Classics in the *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*," in J. G. Rowe, ed., *Aspects of Late Medieval Government and Society: Essays Presented to J. R. Lander* (Toronto, 1986), p. 41.
104. Aeschylus 241-242.
105. Herodotus V.49.
106. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, especially pp. 291-323.
107. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, p. 28.
108. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 5, pp. 53-100.
109. V. D. Hanson, "Review of W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part I-V," *Classical Philology* 87 (1992): 256.
110. See W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 3 (Berkeley, 1979), p. 8, regarding Wilamowitz's viewpoint.
111. Herodotus VII.140.
112. Ibid., VII.141.
113. Ibid., VI.106-107.
114. Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 48.
115. Herodotus IX.62.
116. Xenophon (*Hellenica* VI.4.7-8) suggests that "all these things were but devices of the leaders."
117. For the trophy, see Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 2, pp. 246-276; for the share of the booty given to the gods, see pt. 1, pp. 93-100.
118. In the fifth century, however, a number of intellectuals questioned this practice; see M. Cicciò, "Guerre, staseis e ásulia nella Grecia del V secolo a.C.," in Marta Sordi, ed., *I santuari e la guerra nel mondo classico* (Milan, 1984), pp. 132-141.

119. See Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, pp. 41–57.
120. F. Rodríguez Adrados, *Ilustración y política en la Grecia clásica* (Madrid, 1966), pp. 121–133, argues that the Greeks considered the favor of the gods essential to their defeat of the Persians.
121. Cf. Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 55.
122. E. Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War*, trans. A. Pfeifer (Garden City, N.Y., 1974; 1st Italian ed. 1966), p. 147.
123. Detienne, “La phalange: Problèmes et controverses,” p. 128.
124. Hammond, “Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia,” pp. 56–57.
125. “The Profession of Arms,” *War*, a television series written by Gwynne Dyer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, June 1984.
126. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, p. 27, n. 107.
127. Thucydides I.70.8.

Chapter Two

1. Pausanias I.32.4.
2. J.A.S. Evans, “Herodotus and the Battle of Marathon,” *Historia* 42 (1993): 306.
3. Herodotus VI.112.
4. Thucydides II.34.5.
5. See his epitaph in M. Dillon and L. Garland, eds. and trans., *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates c. 800–399 B.C.* (London, 1994), p. 189.
6. Aristophanes, *Equites* 781ff.
7. Aristophanes, *Acharnenses* 697ff.
8. For an introduction to the Persian Empire, see chap. 13 (“The Achaemenid Empire c. 550–330”) and relevant bibliography (pp. 756–762) in Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 B.C.*, vol. 2 (London, 1995).
9. Herodotus V.49.
10. *Ibid.*, V.50.
11. J. M. Balcer, “The Persian Wars Against Greece: A Reassessment,” *Historia* 38 (1989): 127–129.
12. On the Persian war plan, see *ibid.*; A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks: The Defense of the West, c. 546–478 B.C.* (London, 1962), pp. 236–237; and J.A.R. Munro, “Some Observations on the Persian Wars,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899): 196; H. Bengtson, ed., *The Greeks and the Persians: From the Sixth to the Fourth Centuries*, trans. J. Conway (New York, 1968; 1st German ed. 1965), pp. 37–46.
13. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, pp. 238–239.
14. Herodotus VI.101.
15. The distance was 23 miles, according to M.O.B. Caspari, “Stray Notes on the Persian Wars,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 31 (1911): 104; he also mentions a return march from Marathon to Athens of no more than 8 hours. N.G.L. Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” in his *Studies in Greek History: A Companion Volume to a History of Greece to 322 B.C.* (Oxford, 1973), p. 210, puts the distance at 26 miles, that is, an 8- or 9-hour march.
16. Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” pp. 202–204.

17. Herodotus VI.102. J. F. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece, 490–479 B.C.* (Warminster, England, 1993), p. 48, argues that “the plain south of Athens itself would have been at least as suitable for cavalry.”

18. Herodotus VI.102, 107.

19. *Ibid.*, VI.107.

20. Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades* 4.1, in Cornelius Nepos, *De viris illustribus*. Half of the 200,000 infantrymen, says Nepos, were present at the battle.

21. Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” p. 203, adopts 25,000 as a *minimum* figure for the fighting troops. According to Hammond (p. 203), the Persian fleet included at least 200 triremes and 400 merchant ships. In addition to the 25,000 soldiers, 52,000 sailors were transported by the fleet.

22. W. W. How, “Arms, Tactics and Strategy in the Persian Wars,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 43 (1923): 123. See also W. K. Pritchett, “Marathon,” *University of California Publications in Classical Archaeology* 4 (1960): 174–175; N. Sekunda, “The Persians,” in J. F. Hackett, ed., *A History of War in the Ancient World* (New York, 1989), pp. 82–103. On the Persians and Greeks, see Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 17–44.

23. How, “Arms, Tactics and Strategy in the Persian Wars,” p. 123.

24. On the primacy of the bow among the Persians, see A. E. Wardman’s remarks in “Tactics and the Tradition of the Persian Wars,” *Historia* 8 (1959): 53.

25. W. McLeod, “The Range of the Ancient Bow,” *Phoenix* 19 (1965): 3.

26. How, “Arms, Tactics and Strategy in the Persian Wars,” p. 120. Delbrück argues that the Persian professional troops were superior to the Athenians; see his *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, p. 69.

27. Cf. P. Bicknell, “The Command Structure and Generals of the Marathon Campaign,” *L’antiquité classique* 39 (1970): 427–442.

28. Hammond (“The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” p. 206) accepts “10,000 as the minimum figure.” Pritchett (“Marathon,” p. 145) seems to prefer a force estimate of about 9,000. Burn (*Persia and the Greeks*, p. 249) also mentions 9,000 troops (or 10,000, if the Plataeans are included). Of the ancient sources, Cornelius Nepos (*Miltiades* 5.1) gives figures of 10,000 Athenians and 1,000 Plataeans, and Pausanias (IV.25.5 and X.20.2) says there were between 9,000 and 10,000 Athenians, including old people and slaves.

29. Burn (*Persia and the Greeks*, p. 243) mentions “perhaps 600 men”; most other sources speak of 1,000.

30. For the location of the battlefield and on the battle itself, see W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 2, *Battlefields* (Berkeley, 1969), pp. 1–11, and pt. 1, pp. 83–93; Pritchett, “Marathon,” pp. 137–190; J.A.G. Van der Veer, “The Battle of Marathon: A Topographical Survey,” *Mnemosyne* 35 (1982): 290–321; Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 45–80; C. Hignett, *Xerxes’ Invasion of Greece* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 55–74; E. Vanderpool, “The Deme of Marathon and the Herakleion,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 70 (1966): 319–323; E. Vanderpool, “A Monument of the Battle of Marathon,” *Hesperia* 35 (1966): 93–106; Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, chap. 12.

31. On the sources, see Pritchett, “Marathon,” pp. 160–172; Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” pp. 227–245; A. W. Gomme, “Herodotus and Marathon,” *The Phoenix* 6 (1952): 77–83; Evans, “Herodotus and the Battle

of Marathon," pp. 279–307; W. W. How, "Cornelius Nepos on Marathon and Paros," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 39 (1919): 48–61.

32. Herodotus VI.109.

33. Ibid.

34. Pausanias I.15.3.

35. Herodotus VI.102.

36. On this, see Balcer, "The Persian Wars Against Greece," pp. 131–132.

37. This was one of two arguments that, according to Cornelius Nepos (*Miltiades* 5.4), convinced the Persians to attack the Greeks. The other argument stressed the superiority of their numbers.

38. Herodotus VI.111.

39. Ibid., VI.95, 101, 102. On the controversy about the Persian cavalry, see Hammond, "The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon," especially pp. 246–248; Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 1, pp. 92–93, and pt. 2, pp. 8–9. Among the supporters of the cavalry are: Evans, "Herodotus and the Battle of Marathon," pp. 293–299; G. Shrimpton, "The Persian Cavalry at Marathon," *Phoenix* 34 (1980): 20–37; and Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 59–61.

40. Evans, "Herodotus and the Battle of Marathon," pp. 293–299.

41. Ibid.

42. Herodotus VI.111.

43. Ibid., VI.111.

44. A roughly north-south position (from the southeastern end of Mount Kotroni to the lower side of Mount Agrieliiki) would be about 1,500 meters; see Pritchett, "Marathon," p. 144. According to Burn (*Persia and the Greeks*, p. 244), the initial front of the Greek line covered 1,250 yards in a position similar to the one Pritchett suggests. Hammond ("The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon," pp. 178–179) accepts a frontage of 1,600 meters, but he believes the armies were deployed differently: the Greeks with Mount Kotroni behind them and the Persians with the sea at their backs. Sir Frederick Maurice ("The Campaign of Marathon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 52 [1932]: 20) mentions a frontage of 2,300 yards. I have followed Pritchett.

45. Pritchett, "Marathon," p. 145. For the battle order of both the Greeks and the Persians, cf. Maurice, "The Campaign of Marathon," pp. 13–24. See Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, p. 64, who argues that, if we assume the Greeks had 10,000 men and that each man occupied 90 centimeters, the frontages would have been 300 for the right, 1,000 for the center, and 315 for the left—a total of about 1,615 meters.

46. McLeod, "The Range of the Ancient Bow," p. 8; Hammond, "The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon," p. 177. But in a later article, McLeod has restated that the maximum effective range was 175 meters; see "The Bowshot and Marathon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 90 (1970): 197–198.

47. Herodotus VI.112.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., VI.113.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., VI.114–115.
54. Pausanias I.14.3.
55. Ibid., I.32.7.
56. Herodotus VI.117.
57. Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades* 5.4.
58. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, p. 72.
59. Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon,” p. 203, estimates the Persian army had a minimum of 25,000 men for the campaign, but he does not give an estimate for the battle.
60. Herodotus VI.115.
61. Ibid., VI.116.
62. Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades* 5.4.
63. But on this, see also Evans’s argument in “Herodotus and the Battle of Marathon,” pp. 300–302.

Chapter Three

1. Herodotus VII.9.
2. Balcer, “The Persian Wars Against Greece: A Reassessment,” pp. 132–135.
3. Herodotus VII.20.
4. Ibid., VII.12–18.
5. Simonides, fragment 172, in *Lyra Graeca*, ed. and trans. J. M. Edmonds, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1958).
6. Herodotus VII.184.
7. On the size of the Persian army, see A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks: The Defense of the West, c. 546–478 B.C.* (London, 1962), pp. 326–330; Sir F. Maurice, “The Size of the Army of Xerxes,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 50 (1930): 210–235.
8. Balcer, “The Persian Wars Against Greece: A Reassessment,” p. 127.
9. See Herodotus VII.184.
10. Ibid., VII.61–99.
11. Ibid., VII.34.
12. Ibid., VII.36.
13. Ibid., VII.22.
14. Ibid., VII.37.
15. Ibid., VII.39.
16. Ibid., VII.138.
17. On the Medizing Greeks, see D. Gillis, *Collaboration with the Persians* (Wiesbaden, 1979).
18. Herodotus VII.172–174.
19. Ibid., VII.175.
20. Cf. P. B. Georges’s account of Greek policy before Salamis, in “Saving Herodotus’s Phenomena: The Oracles and the Events of 480 B.C.,” *Classical Antiquity* 5 (1986): 14–59.
21. Herodotus VII.175.
22. Ibid.
23. I am following A. Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques autour de la bataille des Thermopyles* (Paris, 1962), pp. 185–187, for the chronology. My account of the

battle is based mainly on Herodotus's account (VII.198–234), with some added details from Diodorus Siculus (XI.4–12).

24. Herodotus VII.210.

25. J. L. Myres, *Herodotus, Father of History* (Oxford, 1956), p. 252.

26. See Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, pp. 9–28. He follows Herodotus's list (VII.202), except in regard to the number of Spartans. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 134–135, calculates the overall Greek force at no more than 8,000.

27. Herodotus VII.202.

28. Simonides of Ceos's inscription is in *ibid.*, VII.228. Diodorus Siculus (XI.4.5) and Isocrates (*Panegyric* 90) list 1,000 Spartans.

29. U. Cozzoli, *Proprietà fondiaria ed esercito nello stato spartano dell'età classica* (Rome, 1979), pp. 92–95, thinks it unlikely that all 300 were hippeis because the bodyguard normally was split between the two kings, who were the customary rulers at Sparta. The Loeb translator of Herodotus, A. D. Godley, suggests something similar: Herodotus VII.205.

30. Pausanias III.14.1.

31. Herodotus VII.210.

32. *Ibid.*, VII.211.

33. *Ibid.*, VII.210.

34. *Ibid.*, VII.211.

35. *Ibid.*

36. This is implied in Diodorus Siculus XI.7.3.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, and also XI.7.2.

39. *Ibid.*, XI.7.3.

40. Herodotus VII.215.

41. *Ibid.*, VII.219.

42. *Ibid.*, VII.220.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Diodorus Siculus XI.4.4.

45. Herodotus VII.220.

46. Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, pp. 64–68.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–71.

48. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, p. 119.

49. Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, pp. 76–77.

50. Herodotus accused them of cowardice; for a strong defense of the Thebans and convincing arguments in their support, see Plutarch, *De Herodoti malignitate*.

51. Herodotus VII.225.

52. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, pp. 91–96.

53. For a summary of the reasons, see G. De Sanctis, "Note critiche sulla storia militare delle guerre persiane," in his *Scritti minori*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1966), pp. 71–78.

54. The Athenians, with some help from the Plataeans, manned 127 ships of the 271 triremes engaged in the first battle of Artemisium (Herodotus VIII.1). Fifty-three Attic triremes joined the Greek fleet before the second battle began (*ibid.*, VIII.14).

55. For the operational limitations of Greek fleets, see F. E. Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley, 1957), especially pp. 37–39.

56. Herodotus VIII.1–23.
57. Ibid., VII.206.
58. Ibid., VI.106.
59. On this, see Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, especially pp. 40–50.
60. On Delbrück's stand and on the role of religion, see Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 3, especially pp. 1–10.
61. Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, pp. 29–50.
62. On this, see De Sanctis, "Note critiche sulla storia militare delle guerre persiane," pp. 78–79.
63. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, pp. 118–119.
64. Herodotus VII.211.
65. On the sea confrontation off Artemisium, see ibid., VIII.1–23.
66. Aeschylus 11–12.
67. G. Smets and A. Dorsinfaing-Smets, "La bataille de Salamine: Les sources," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 12 (1952): 415.
68. Herodotus (VII.144) says that 200 ships were built with the money. Aristotle (*Politica* 22.7) mentions 100 triremes, but Themistocles' decree supports Herodotus's estimate; see Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Greece*, p. 201. Cf. R. J. Lenardon, *The Saga of Themistocles* (London, 1978), pp. 51–56; V. Gabrielsen, *Financing the Athenian Fleet: Public Taxation and Social Relations* (Baltimore, 1994), pp. 25–37.
69. Thucydides I.74.1.
70. Herodotus VII.173. The Athenians are not singled out in terms of their contribution to the 10,000 men guarding the pass, but clearly they were among them because one of the generals was the Athenian Themistocles.
71. The rest had been left at Athens, probably to prevent a Persian landing there or to protect the city against an attack by another Greek community, Aegina, with whom they were at war; see J. S. Morrison, "The Greek Ships at Salamis and the Diekplous," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 197.
72. Herodotus VII.10.
73. Ibid., VIII.97.
74. For Greek policy at this stage, cf. N. Robertson, "The True Meaning of the 'Wooden Wall,'" *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): 1–20. For the battle, cf. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 151–216.
75. Herodotus VIII.71.
76. The position was similar to the one taken at Artemisium.
77. The following discussion is partially based on R. Custance, *War at Sea: Modern Theory and Ancient Practice* (London, 1970; 1st ed. 1918), pp. 13–30.
78. On this, cf. Balcer, "The Persian Wars Against Greece," pp. 136–139.
79. However, the Persian fleet still outnumbered the Greek fleet at Salamis—1,207 ships against 310, according to Aeschylus (lines 339–343); also, Herodotus VIII.48 puts the Greek strength at 380 ships. But on this, see Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*, pp. 268–270. In *The Athenian Trireme: The History and Reconstruction of an Ancient Greek Warship* (Cambridge, 1986), J. S. Morrison and J. E. Coates accept the figures of about 957 for the Persians and 380 for the Greeks.
80. Cf. the short but cogent summary of these reasons in Smets and Dorsinfaing-Smets, "La bataille de Salamine," p. 417.

81. Lenardon, *The Saga of Themistocles*, p. 25.

82. Thucydides I.138.

83. Herodotus VIII.75.

84. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, p. 208.

85. Aeschylus 357–360.

86. *Ibid.*, 361–371.

87. On this, see the brief comments in Smets and Dorsinfang-Smets, “La bataille de Salamine,” pp. 409–413. The authors reject Diodorus Siculus’s statement (XI.17.2), which I accept as credible. N. Nikolaou strongly supports the reliability of Diodorus’s account; see his “La bataille de Salamine d’après Diodore de Sicile,” *Revue des études grecques* 95 (1982): 145–156.

88. Aeschylus (382–383) seems to imply that the Persian ships patrolled the exits, sweeping back and forth rather than proceeding into the straits.

89. I identify the modern island of Lipsokoutali as Herodotus’s Psyttaleia (VIII.76; see also Aeschylus 447–464). On this, see Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 1, pp. 94–102. Hammond (*Studies in Greek History*, pp. 253–265) thinks that Psyttaleia is instead the modern island of Ayios Yeryos, which is in the middle of the straits, west of the city of Salamis.

90. Pausanias I.36.2.

91. Aeschylus 450–454; Herodotus VIII.76.

92. Herodotus VIII.78–83.

93. *Ibid.*, VIII.83.

94. Burn, *Greeks and Persians*, p. 458.

95. Herodotus’s malicious gossip about the Corinthians fleeing in panic should be disregarded. He says at the end of the story that “all Hellas” accepts the Corinthian version, that is, that their ships were “among the foremost in the battle” (Herodotus VIII.94). The epitaph in honor of the Corinthians who died at Salamis reminds the reader, “[O friend! in the well watered] city of Corinth we once lived. [But now we lie in Aia]s’ [island of Salamis. Here we captured Phoenician ships and Persian, and we saved holy Greece from the Medes],” in C. W. Fornara, ed. and trans., *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 25.

96. Aeschylus 386–387.

97. *Ibid.*, 389–390.

98. *Ibid.*, 398.

99. I am following Hammond’s reconstruction of the lines; see his *Studies in Greek History*, p. 283.

100. Herodotus VIII.84.

101. Aeschylus 399.

102. Morrison, “The Greek Ships at Salamis and the *Diekplous*,” p. 199.

103. Herodotus VIII.84.

104. Thucydides I.49.1–2, 3.

105. Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*, p. 296.

106. Morrison and Coates, *The Athenian Trireme*, p. 58.

107. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–60.

108. Plutarch, *Themistocles* 14.1, in *Vitae*. Themistocles’ decree says that “they should also choose [t]en ma[r]ines [for eac]h ship from those between twenty [and thi]rty years of age and four archers”; see Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Greece*,

p. 201. An exceptional circumstance is reflected in the decree of 430 B.C. The fighting potential of a fleet of 30 ships included 5 volunteer *epibatai* (special hoplites), 40 additional hoplites, 10 archers, and 10 peltasts for each boat. The aim of the expedition was to collect tribute or to raid the Peloponnese (Gabrielsen, *Financing the Athenian Fleet*, pp. 106–107).

109. Herodotus VII.184.

110. Aeschylus 408–409, 421.

111. *Ibid.*, 272–273, 275–277.

112. Plutarch, *Themistocles* 14.2.

113. Smets and Dorsinfang-Smets, “La bataille de Salamine,” p. 413.

114. Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*, p. 287.

115. Burn, *Greece and Persia*, p. 461; Herodotus VIII.94.

116. Aeschylus 386–387.

117. *Ibid.*, 428.

118. *Ibid.*, 412.

119. Herodotus VIII.89.

120. Aeschylus 415–416; also Herodotus VIII.89.

121. Aeschylus 417.

122. Herodotus VIII.86.

123. My reconstruction of the battle is based mainly on Aeschylus and Herodotus, although the often conflicting views of a number of authors—Hammond, Pritchett, De Sanctis, Hignett, and Burn, just to mention a few—have been very useful as well. I have also used Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus.

124. Herodotus VIII.91.

125. Aeschylus 418.

126. *Ibid.*, 420.

127. *Ibid.*, 421.

128. *Ibid.*, 423.

129. *Ibid.*, 424–426.

130. Herodotus VIII.89.

131. Aeschylus 456.

132. *Ibid.*, 441–443. Also Herodotus VII.95.

133. Diodorus Siculus XI.19.3. Balcer (“The Persian Wars Against Greece,” p. 138) argues that the Persians lost “perhaps a few more” than the Greeks. If this is correct and if we assume that the Persians initially had a large numerical superiority, why did Xerxes not attack again?

134. Herodotus VIII.89.

135. *Ibid.*

136. The Greeks thought that Xerxes “would yet again use his ships which were left”; see Herodotus VIII.96.

137. Strauss and Ober, *The Anatomy of Error*, p. 36.

138. Herodotus VIII.126.

139. *Ibid.*, VIII.128–129.

140. *Ibid.*, IX.28.

141. *Ibid.*

142. For Plataea, see W. K. Pritchett, “New Light on Plataia,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 61 (1957): 9–28; Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*,

pt. 1, pp. 103–121; Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, chap. 7 and apps. 10–12; Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, pp. 289–344; Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 217–247.

143. De Sanctis, “Note critiche sulla storia militare delle guerre persiane,” p. 93; R. Nyland, “Herodotos’ Sources for the Plataiai Campaign,” *L’antiquité classique* 61 (1992): 80–97.

144. Herodotus IX.28–30.

145. *Ibid.*, IX.33.

146. J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (London, 1983), p. 123. Cf. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, pp. 267, 354–355, 438.

147. Herodotus IX.66.

148. For Mardonius’s order of battle, see *ibid.*, IX.31.

149. *Ibid.*, IX.61.

150. When Artabazos, the general of the center of the Persian line, withdrew at the end of the battle of Plataea, he chose a line of retreat through Phocis; see Herodotus IX.66.

151. *Ibid.*, IX.20–25.

152. *Ibid.*, IX.20, 22.

153. *Ibid.*, IX.28.

154. *Ibid.*

155. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, p. 49. Cf. Herodotus IX.22.

156. Herodotus IX.22.

157. *Ibid.*, IX.22–23.

158. *Ibid.*, IX.25.

159. Cf. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, pp. 308–311.

160. M.O.B. Caspari, “Stray Notes on the Persian Wars,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 31 (1911): 109.

161. De Sanctis, “Note critiche sulla storia militare delle guerre persiane,” p. 94.

162. *Ibid.*

163. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, pp. 318–319.

164. Herodotus IX.41.

165. *Ibid.*, IX.39.

166. *Ibid.*, IX.41–47.

167. *Ibid.*, IX.49.

168. *Ibid.*

169. *Ibid.*, IX.51.

170. *Ibid.*, IX.52–53.

171. See Nyland’s argument in “Herodotos’ Sources for the Plataiai Campaign,” pp. 80–97.

172. Herodotus IX.53–54.

173. *Ibid.*, IX.58–65.

174. *Ibid.*, IX.59.

175. *Ibid.*, IX.61.

176. *Ibid.*

177. De Sanctis, “Note critiche sulla storia militare delle guerre persiane,” p. 97.

178. Herodotus IX.61.

179. *Ibid.*, IX.63.

180. Ibid., IX.68.
181. Ibid., IX.66.
182. Ibid., IX.69.
183. Ibid., IX.68.
184. Ibid., IX.69.
185. Ibid.
186. Ibid., IX.70.
187. Plutarch, *Aristides* 19, in *Vitae*.
188. Herodotus IX.70.
189. Ibid., IX.67.
190. Ibid., IX.68.
191. Aeschylus 85.
192. Ibid., 25–26.
193. See Kuhrt's discussion of the problem in *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, pp. 652–656.
194. Herodotus VII.61–99.
195. The early-sixth-century inscription does not correspond to Herodotus's list (III.98ff), probably because Darius lists people and Herodotus lists satrapies (Persian administrative provinces); see Fornara, ed. and trans., *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 36. Cf. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, pp. 676–677.
196. Aeschylus 86.
197. Ibid., 104–105.
198. Ibid., 126–132.
199. Herodotus VII.61.
200. Ibid.
201. Ibid., VII.63.
202. Ibid., IX.22.
203. Ibid., VII.61.
204. Ibid., VII.63.
205. Ibid., VII.61.
206. Ibid., IX.99.
207. Ibid., VII.61–63, 72–76, 78–80. The list does not include the Ionian Greeks.
208. Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*, p. 222.
209. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, p. 123.
210. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, p. 355. He estimates a total of 79,000, 9,000 of whom were horsemen. He does not include the Thracians and the Macedonians in the total.
211. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, pp. 67–71.
212. Herodotus VII.81; but see also Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, p. 42.
213. Herodotus VII.210.
214. Ibid., IX.31–32.
215. Burn, *Greece and Persia*, pp. 323–326.
216. Herodotus IX.39.
217. Ibid., IX.49. See also IX.50, where Herodotus explicitly says that the Greeks were cut off from the water.
218. Ibid., IX.39.

219. Ibid., IX.50.
220. Ibid., IX.52.
221. Ibid., IX.18.
222. Ibid., IX.20, 22.
223. Ibid., IX.49.
224. Ibid., IX.51.
225. Ibid., IX.57–60.
226. Ibid., IX.18.
227. Ibid., IX.60–62.
228. Ibid., IX.22–23. On the tactical role of the Persian cavalry, see also Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*, pp. 207–208.
229. Herodotus IX.61.
230. Ibid., IX.99.
231. Ibid., IX.62.
232. Ibid., IX.102.
233. Ibid., IX.62.
234. That the Persians engaged in some form of hand-to-hand combat even after surrounding the Greeks at Thermopylae is implied by Herodotus's statement (VII.225) that the Greeks also fought with fists and teeth.
235. Archers and missile units in general are not mentioned at all at Thermopylae except during the last stage of the battle (ibid.). Herodotus suggests that the first two days of the battle were mainly a hand-to-hand affair.
236. Ibid., IX.51.
237. Ibid., IX.56.
238. Cf. W. W. How, "Arms, Tactics and Strategy in the Persian Wars," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 43 (1923): 117–132.
239. Hammond, "The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon," p. 208.
240. The confrontations at Marathon and especially Thermopylae convey this impression.
241. The Tegeans and Spartans were sorely tested at Plataea. But their casualties (91 Spartans and 17 Tegeans)—even if we assume that all were incurred against the Persian left wing and not in the siege of the Persian camp—do not seem to be high considering that the Tegeans and Spartans had been subjected first to the action of the cavalry and then to the Persian infantry.
242. The argument on the efficacy of the Persian horsemen and on the fear that they inspired in the Greeks is developed in A. E. Wardman, "Tactics and Tradition of the Persian Wars," *Historia* 8 (1959): 49–60. Wardman also suggests (p. 55) that the Greeks had a healthy respect for the power of the Persian bowmen and that it was for this reason that the Athenians had a number of archers with them at Plataea.
243. For instance, Hanson (*The Other Greeks*, pp. 271–287) argues that the home advantage was crucial in determining victory in confrontations between hoplites. For a short military analysis of the wars, see A. Ferrill, *The Origins of War* (London, 1985), pp. 107–123.
244. Herodotus VIII.90.
245. Strauss and Ober, *The Anatomy of Error*, p. 23.
246. Balcer, "The Persian Wars Against Greece," pp. 132–136.
247. Strauss and Ober, *The Anatomy of Error*, p. 26.

248. Ibid., p. 32.
249. On this, see Balcer, "The Persian Wars Against Greece," p. 135.
250. Thucydides I.69.5. Cf. Balcer, "The Persian Wars Against Greece," p. 129.
251. On this, see G. Ceaușescu, "Un topos de la littérature antique: L'éternelle guerre entre l'Europe et l'Asie," *Latomus* 50 (1991): 326–341.
252. Herodotus VII.223.
253. Cf. N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England, 1992).
254. S. Goldhill, "Battle Narrative and Politics in Aeschylus' *Persae*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988): 189.
255. Aeschylus 403.
256. Herodotus IX.53–57.
257. Ibid., VII.223.
258. Ibid., IX.62.
259. Ibid., VII.35.
260. Ibid., VII.238.
261. Ibid., IX.41.
262. Ibid., IX.65.
263. Herodotus implies at various places that the Persians were different from the Greeks. See, for instance, his comments on the Spartans' curiosity about the people killed at Marathon (VI.112), the remarks about Masistius, the leader of the cavalry at Plataea (IX.22), or the discussion of the presentation of Xerxes' army (VII.61–99).
264. G. Pugliese Carratelli, "Le guerre mediche e il sorgere della solidarietà ellenica," in Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, ed., *La Persia e il mondo greco-romano*, Roma 11–14 aprile 1965 (Rome, 1966), p. 150. See also Aeschylus, lines 159–172.
265. Goldhill, "Battle Narrative and Politics in Aeschylus' *Persae*," pp. 190–191.
266. Pugliese Carratelli, "Le guerre mediche e il sorgere della solidarietà ellenica," pp. 147–150.
267. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, p. 648, on one of the Greek stereotypes of the enemies.
268. P. Cartledge, "Herodotus and 'the Other': A Meditation on Empire," *Echos du Monde Classique* 34 (1990): 38.
269. E. Hall, "Asia Unmanned: Images of Victory in Classical Athens," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), p. 111.
270. Ibid., pp. 117, 129, 130.
271. Goldhill, "Battle Narrative and Politics in Aeschylus' *Persae*," p. 192. The reference to Aeschylus are lines 388–389, 393, 402–406, 399–400, 421, 481, 58, 302–329, 930–1001.
272. R. Cantarella, "La Persia nella letteratura greca," in Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, ed., *La Persia e il mondo greco-romano*, Roma 11–14 aprile 1965 (Rome, 1966), pp. 489–504.
273. Herodotus VII.210.
274. Ibid., IX.62.
275. For a recent account on the use of this opposition, see P. Fussler, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975).
276. Hippocrates XVI, XXIII.

277. F. H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 3–4.
278. Aeschylus 402–405.
279. On this, see also Pugliese Carratelli, “Le guerre mediche e il sorgere della solidarietà ellenica,” pp. 147–156.
280. E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity* (Stockholm, 1965), p. 405, n. 824.
281. Herodotus VIII.24.
282. Daskalakis, *Problèmes historiques*, p. 5.
283. Simonides, fragments 128, 129, and 130, in *Lyra Graeca*, ed. and trans. J. M. Edmonds, vol. 2.
284. Diodorus Siculus XI.11.5. See also Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, pp. 217, 218.
285. Simonides, fragment 117, in *Lyra Graeca*, ed. and trans. J. M. Edmonds, vol. 2.
286. *Ibid.*, fragment 124.
287. *Ibid.*, fragment 125.
288. *Ibid.*, fragment 127.
289. Fornara, *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 51. I have changed the order of Fornara’s translation slightly. There is debate about whether the fragment refers to 490 or 480 B.C.
290. Aristides, a personal enemy of Themistocles, put aside his hatred of the man to warn him of the impending attack by the Persian fleet; see Herodotus VIII.79–81.
291. Another reason for Herodotus’s hostility toward the Thebans was the fact that they were traditional enemies of the Athenians.
292. Herodotus VII.220.
293. Diodorus Siculus XI.11.2.
294. *Ibid.*, XI.11.3.
295. *Ibid.*
296. Herodotus VII.212.
297. Diodorus Siculus XI.11.1.
298. Herodotus VII.129–231.
299. *Ibid.*, VII.228.
300. Diodorus Siculus XI.11.5.
301. *Ibid.*, XI.11.2.
302. *Ibid.*, XI.11.3.
303. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, pp. 106, 107.
304. Herodotus VII.204.
305. *Ibid.*, VII.228. Simonides of Ceos was the author of the inscription.
306. H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland, 1966), pp. 262–263.
307. Plutarch, *De Herodoti malignitate* 39–42, and *Aristides* 19, in *Vitae*. Cf. Nyland, “Herodotos’ Sources for the Plataiai Campaign,” pp. 82–83.

Chapter Four

1. J. Taillardat, “La trière athenienne et la guerre sur la mer aux V^e et IV^e siècles,” in J.-P. Vernant, ed., *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1968), pp. 184–185.

2. Ibid., 185.
3. Ibid.; Thucydides VII.12.3.
4. B. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period: A Study of the Athenian Naval Administration in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 186–187.
5. Taillardat, “La trière athenienne et la guerre sur la mer aux V^e et IV^e siècles,” p. 201.
6. Ibid.
7. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period*, pp. 91, 210.
8. V. Gabrielsen, *Financing the Athenian Fleet: Public Taxation and Social Relations* (Baltimore, 1994), pp. 106–107.
9. Taillardat, “La trière athenienne et la guerre sur la mer aux V^e et IV^e siècles,” p. 202.
10. Garlan, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 132.
11. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period*, pp. 210–264; Morrison and Coates, *The Athenian Trireme*, pp. 108–109.
12. Thucydides III.18.3–4.
13. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period*, pp. 205–206.
14. Ibid., p. 195. This was true not only of Athens but also of other states (p. 200).
15. Ibid., pp. 210–264.
16. For instance, prestige was based on land ownership even in a maritime state such as Renaissance Venice; see A. Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del ‘400 e ‘500* (Bari, 1974).
17. For the following analysis of Spartan society, see Xenophon, *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*; U. Cozzoli, “Lo stato spartano del V secolo,” in R. Bianchi Bandinelli, ed., *La Grecia nell’età di Pericle: Storia, letteratura, filosofia* (Milan, 1979), pp. 93–118; E. David, *Sparta Between Empire and Revolution (404–243 B.C.): Internal Problems and Their Impact on Contemporary Greek Consciousness* (New York, 1981), especially chaps. 1–2; J. T. Hooker, *The Ancient Spartans* (London, 1980), pp. 116–119.
18. Xenophon, *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* VII.5–6.
19. Ibid., VII.1–2.
20. On this, see ibid., II–III, especially II.10–11.
21. Ibid., IV.2.
22. Ibid., VI.2.
23. Ibid., VI.3–4.
24. Ibid., VI.3.
25. Ibid., IX.3–6.
26. Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Greece*, p. 52.
27. Herodotus IX.73.
28. Xenophon, *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* XI.3.
29. Ibid., II.7–9.
30. Ibid., VII.
31. Ibid., II.1–2.
32. Ibid., I.8.
33. Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.5.10.
34. See Dillon and Garland’s comments on Sparta’s festival and their translated passage from Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12.50, in *Ancient Greece*, pp. 179–180.

35. M. I. Finley, "Sparta," in J.-P. Vernant, ed., *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1968), pp. 143–160.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–147.

37. For instance, after the battle of Plataea, the Spartan Pausanias received "ten of everything—women, horses, camels, and everything else" (Herodotus IX.83).

38. J. B. Bury and Russell Meiggs, *A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great* (London, 1982), p. 98.

39. Poseidonios FGH 87 F48c, in Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Greece*, p. 171.

40. Aristotle, *Politica* II.9, 16. Cf. Cozzoli, *Proprietà fondiaria ed esercito nello stato spartano dell'età classica*, p. 8.

41. Herodotus VII.234, and IX.10, 11, 28, 29.

42. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.15.

43. Plutarch, *Agis* 5.6, in *Vitae*.

44. Some of the following comments are based on S. Hodkinson, "Warfare, Wealth, and the Crisis of Spartiate Society," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), pp. 146–176; Finley, "Sparta," pp. 143–160; and especially Aristotle, *Politica* 1270–1271.

45. Thucydides I.130.1–132.4.

46. P. Cartledge sees the Spartiate-helot relationship in terms of a class struggle, a view contested recently by R. J. Talbert, "The Role of the Helots in the Class Struggle at Sparta," *Historia* 38 (1989): 22–40. But see Cartledge's rejoinder in "Richard Talbert's Revision of the Spartan-Helot Struggle: A Reply," *Historia* 40 (1991): 379–381.

47. Thucydides IV.80.2–5. Cf. B. Jordan, "The Ceremony of the Helots in Thucydides, IV, 80," *L'antiquité classique* 59 (1990): 37–69.

48. H. W. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers from the Earliest Times to the Battle of Ipsus* (Oxford, 1970; 1st ed. 1933), pp. 14–15. For an introduction to the Peloponnesian War, see two recent works by D. Kagan, "Athenian Strategy in the Peloponnesian War," in W. Murray, M. Knox, and A. Bernstein, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 24–55, and *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York, 1995), pp. 15–79.

49. Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, pp. 94–95.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

52. G. T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* (Groningen, 1968; 1st ed. 1935), p. 1.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

54. *Ibid.*; Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*, pp. 227–228.

55. On this, see Parke, *Greek Mercenaries Soldiers*, pp. 228–234.

56. V. D. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Pisa, 1983), and especially his recent work, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (New York, 1995).

57. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, especially pp. 41–58, 134–142.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 233–234.

60. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*, p. 237.

61. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, p. 28.
62. On the Greek *condottieri*, see *ibid.*, pt. 2, pp. 51–116.
63. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*, pp. 235–236.
64. Thucydides IV.29.3.
65. *Ibid.*, IV.26.4.
66. *Ibid.*, IV.39.1.
67. *Ibid.*, IV.16.1.
68. *Ibid.*, IV.23.
69. *Ibid.*, IV.2.26.5
70. *Ibid.*, IV.27–30.
71. *Ibid.*, IV.8.9.
72. *Ibid.*, IV.31.2
73. Cf. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 1, pp. 6–29.
74. Thucydides IV.30.2.
75. *Ibid.*, IV.31.
76. *Ibid.*, IV.32.1.
77. *Ibid.*
78. That is, at least 100 men per ship. On board were left only the thalamites, probably the lowest rank among the rowers; see *ibid.*, IV.32.2.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, IV.32.3
81. *Ibid.*, IV.32.3.4.
82. *Ibid.*, IV.33.1.
83. *Ibid.*, IV.33.2. On the system of attack of light troops, see also IV.2.32: “These troops [the light infantry] were the Lacedaemonians’ most difficult opponents, since they could fight effectively at a distance with arrows, javelins, stones and slings. The Lacedaemonians would not even get near them: the troops would overcome them by running away and then again by harrying the Lacedaemonians when they retreated in their turn.”
84. *Ibid.*, IV.34.2.
85. *Ibid.*, IV.35.1–2.
86. *Ibid.*, IV.35.3.
87. *Ibid.*, IV.36.3.
88. *Ibid.*, IV.36.2.
89. *Ibid.*, IV.37.3.
90. *Ibid.*, IV.38.
91. *Ibid.*, IV.40.1.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Ibid.*, IV.40.2.
94. For an introduction to the debate, see Holladay, “Hoplites and Heresies,” pp. 94–103.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
100. Herodotus IX.61.

101. Ibid., IX.79.
102. Thucydides, IV.38.6.
103. Ibid., IV.16ff.
104. At times, the state might provide armor for the mercenaries. On this, see the contrasting view of P. McKechnie, "Greek Mercenary Troops and Their Equipment," *Historia* 43 (1994): 297–305, and D. Whitehead, "Who Equipped Mercenary Troops in Classical Greece?" *Historia* 40 (1991): 105–113.
105. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*, pp. 83–90.
106. Cartledge, "Hoplites and Heroes: Sparta's Contribution to the Technique of Ancient Warfare," p. 24.
107. Thucydides IV.2.9.
108. Holladay, "Hoplites and Heresies," p. 101.
109. E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, 1976).
110. On the Thracian peltast, see J.G.P. Best, *Thracian Peltasts and Their Influence on Greek Warfare* (Groningen, 1969).
111. My account is based on Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.5.11–18.
112. Ibid., IV.5.11–12.
113. Ibid., IV.5.14.
114. Ibid., IV.5.16.
115. Ibid.
116. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 125.
117. Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.5.18.
118. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 125.
119. Ibid., pp. 111–140.
120. Pritchett, *The Greek State of War*, pt. 2, pp. 124–125.
121. Ibid., p. 125.
122. Hanson, *The Other Greeks*, p. 322. The author discusses the economy of hoplite warfare at great length on pp. 291–323.
123. W. H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A.D. 1000* (Chicago, 1982).
124. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 2, pp. 157–186. Cf. J. Roisman, *The General Demosthenes and His Use of Military Surprise* (Stuttgart, 1993).
125. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 2, p. 156.
126. Thucydides IV.94.
127. Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.2.18. For the whole battle, see Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 142–150, maps on pp. 398–399. For the Spartan approach to battle, see Cartledge, "Hoplites and Heroes: Sparta's Contribution to the Technique of Ancient Warfare," pp. 11–23.
128. Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.2.18–23.
129. Ibid., IV.2.18.
130. On the battle, see *ibid.*, IV.3.15–21; also see the perceptive analysis in Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 150–154.
131. Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV.3.19.
132. Ibid., IV.3.16.
133. Ibid., IV.3.18.
134. J. G. DeVoto, "The Theban Sacred Band," *Ancient World* 23 (1992): 5–6.

135. See *ibid.* for the characteristics of the Sacred Band; Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18–19, in *Vitae*.

136. D. Ogden, "Homosexuality and Warfare in Ancient Greece," in A. B. Lloyd, ed., *Battle in Antiquity* (Chippenham, Wiltshire, England, 1996), pp. 107–168. See also P. Cartledge, "The Politics of Spartan Pederasty," *PCPS* (1981): 21; K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978); D. M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York, 1990).

137. Plato, *Symposium* 178c–179a; Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18, in *Vitae*.

138. C. Hindley, "Eros and Military Command in Xenophon," *Classical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 365.

139. *Ibid.*, pp. 365–367. Ogden ("Homosexuality and Warfare in Ancient Greece," pp. 107–168) agrees that the Greeks believed many negative things about homosexuality.

140. On the encounter, see Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 17, in *Vitae*; Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 163–164.

141. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 17, in *Vitae*.

142. *Ibid.*

143. *Ibid.*, 4.

144. Plutarch, *Agessilaus* 27–28, in *Vitae*.

145. My main ancient sources for the battle have been Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.3–15, and Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 20–23, in *Vitae*. My understanding has also been sharpened by reading a number of modern accounts, the most useful of which have been Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 192–220; Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony*, pp. 46–69; G. L. Cawkwell, "Epaminondas and Thebes," *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1972): 254–278; V. D. Hanson, "Epameinondas, the Battle of Leuktra (371 B.C.) and the 'Revolution' in Greek Battle Tactics," *Classical Antiquity* 7 (1988): 190–207; C. D. Hamilton, *Agessilaus and the Failure of Spartan Hegemony* (Ithaca, 1991), pp. 204–211; Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 166–170.

146. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 198.

147. Hamilton, *Agessilaus and the Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, p. 207.

148. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.5.

149. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, p. 198.

150. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.15.

151. Diodorus Siculus XV.52.

152. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.6.; Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 20.2, in *Vitae*; Pausanias IX.13.6–7; Diodorus Siculus XV.53.3.

153. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.7. Xenophon believes that Epaminondas's accusation was false.

154. *Ibid.*

155. Polyaeus II.3.15.

156. *Ibid.*, VI.4.12.

157. Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony*, p. 63.

158. *Ibid.*

159. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.12.

160. Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony*, p. 63.

161. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.10.

162. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 23, in *Vitae*.

163. Ibid.

164. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.10–11.

165. Ibid., VI.4.13.

166. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 23, in *Vitae*. However, compare it with Hanson, "Epameinondas, the Battle of Leuktra (371 B.C.) and the 'Revolution' in Greek Battle Tactics," pp. 190–207. Hanson is among the historians who claim that "none [of Epaminondas's battle tactics at Leuctra] can be seen as either revolutionary or even especially novel" (p. 205).

167. Polyaeus II.3.15.

168. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 23, in *Vitae*. Four different viewpoints have emerged on the position occupied by the Sacred Band: in ambush, as a wedge in the front, in the left-hand corner of the Theban phalanx, or in the first 4 to 5 rows. For the debate, see the summary in DeVoto, "The Theban Sacred Band," pp. 12–13.

169. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 23, in *Vitae*.

170. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.4.13.

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid., VI.4.15.

173. Ibid., VI.4–5.

174. Ibid., VI.4.8.

175. Ibid., VI.4.7–8.

176. Ibid., VI.4.10–11.

177. Ibid., VI.4.15.

178. Ibid., VI.4.12.

179. Ibid., VI.4.13.

180. Diodorus Siculus XV.87.5–6.

Chapter Five

1. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VI.1.12. Xenophon was reporting the words of Jason, tyrant of Pherae in Thessaly.

2. On the controversy, see the summary in L. Moretti, "Nascita e struttura dello stato macedone," in Bianchi Bandinelli, ed., *Storia e civiltà dei Greci*, vol. 5, *La crisi della polis: Storia, letteratura, filosofia* (Milan, 1979), pp. 75–80. Herodotus (V.22), however, had no doubts about the "Greekness" of the Macedonians.

3. On this, see the summary in M. Austin, "Alexander and the Macedonian Invasion of Asia: Aspects of the Historiography of War and Empire in Antiquity," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), pp. 200–201.

4. Moretti, "Nascita e struttura dello stato macedone," p. 79.

5. On the process of empire building by the Macedonians, see N.G.L. Hammond, *Alexander the Great: King, Commander and Statesman* (Park Ridge, N.J., 1980), especially pp. 7–23.

6. See E. N. Borza, "The Natural Resources of Early Macedonia," in W. L. Adams and E. N. Borza, eds., *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* (Washington, D.C., 1982), pp. 1–20.

7. Moretti, "Nascita e struttura dello stato macedone," p. 91.

8. Herodotus V.3.

9. Not all share this view. For instance, J. R. Ellis does not believe in the importance of the Theban contact; see *Philip II and Macedonian Imperialism* (London, 1976), pp. 43–44.

10. For most of the following discussion, cf. R. A. Billows, *Kings and Colonists: Aspects of Macedonian Imperialism* (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1995), pp. 11–20, summarizing the works of other authors, including: G. T. Griffith, “Philip as a General and the Macedonian Army,” in M. Hatzopoulos and L. Loukopoulos, eds., *Philip of Macedon* (Athens, 1980), pp. 58–77; Griffith, “Makedonika: Notes on the Macedonians of Philip and Alexander,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 4 (1956–1957): 3–10; Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 175–186; Ellis, *Philip II and Macedonian Imperialism*; R. D. Milns, “The Army of Alexander the Great,” *Entretiens Hardt* 22 (1975): 87–129; M. M. Markle, “The Macedonian Sarissa, Spear, and Related Armor,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 81 (1977): 323–339; Markle, “Use of the Sarissa by Philip and Alexander of Macedon,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 82 (1978): 483–497; Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 24–34.

11. P. Manti, “The Sarissa of the Macedonian Infantry,” *The Ancient World* 23 (1992): 39.

12. Billows, *Kings and Colonists*, p. 13.

13. Hammond, “Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia,” p. 63.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Billows, *Kings and Colonists*, pp. 14–15.

16. Hammond, “Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia,” p. 63.

17. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 67.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67. Cf. A. B. Bosworth, “Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedon,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106 (1986): 2–3.

19. For my statistical analysis of the recruitment, I have used the figures given in Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 26–30, 66–67.

20. Alexander apparently left another 12,000 infantrymen in Macedonia; see *ibid.*, pp. 27, 66–67.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 66–67.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. A. Devine, “Alexander the Great,” in John Hackett, ed., *Warfare in the Ancient World* (New York, 1989), p. 107.

28. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 27.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

30. Markle, “Macedonian Arms and Tactics Under Alexander the Great,” in B. Barr-Sharrar and E. N. Borza, eds., *Macedonia and Greece*, pp. 88–92.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–94, on the Macedonian shield and p. 94 on the lack of armor. See Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 1, pp. 150–151, on the hoplite shield.

32. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 32, mentions three or four spear points; Polybius VIII.29.5–7, speaking of Hellenistic armies that apparently used a longer sarissa, mentions five spear points; Markle, "Macedonian Arms and Tactics Under Alexander the Great," p. 99, agrees with Polybius.

33. Cf. Arrian I.6. On Spartan drill, see Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*, pp. 94–110.

34. On the ability to assume different formations, see Alexander's Balkan campaign in Arrian, especially I.6. Cf. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 32, 45–57; Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, pp. 72–73.

35. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 28, 32–33; Markle, "Macedonian Arms and Tactics Under Alexander the Great," pp. 98–99.

36. L. J. Worley is of a different opinion. He argues that the cavalry played an important role in ancient warfare. See his *Hippeis: The Cavalry of Ancient Greece*.

37. On the food and water requirements of horses, see D. W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 126–130.

38. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 25.

39. Arrian I.15.5.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., I.15.8.

44. Curtius III.11.13–15 on Issus.

45. Arrian III.15.3.

46. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 31–32.

47. E. W. Marsden, *The Campaign of Gaugamela* (Liverpool, 1964), pp. 70–71.

48. Ibid., pp. 69–70.

49. On Granicus, see N.G.L. Hammond, "The Battle of the River Granicus," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 73–88; Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 68–76; A. Devine, "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," *Phoenix* 40 (1986); Devine, "A Pawn-Sacrifice at the Battle of the Granicus: The Origins of a Favorite Stratagem of Alexander the Great," *The Ancient World* 18 (1988): 3–20; E. Badian, "The Battle of Granicus: A New Look," *Ancient Macedonia* 2 (1977): 271–293; G. Foss, "The Battle of Granicus: A New Look," *Ancient Macedonia* 2 (1977): 495–502; Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 194–199; A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1988); Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 114–125; N. T. Nikolitsis, *The Battle of the Granicus* (Stockholm, 1974).

50. Arrian I.14.4.

51. Devine, "A Pawn-Sacrifice at the Battle of the Granicus: The Origins of a Favorite Stratagem of Alexander the Great," *The Ancient World* 18: 7. This article is a variation of Devine's "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," pp. 265–278.

52. Nikolitsis, *The Battle of the Granicus*, p. 10.

53. Devine, "A Pawn-Sacrifice at the Battle of the Granicus," p. 3.

54. Devine, "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," p. 277.

55. Arrian I.12.9–10.

56. Plutarch, *Alexander* 15, in *Vitae*.

57. Arrian I.14.4; cf. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 73.

58. Arrian I.15.4.
59. J.F.C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (London, 1958), p. 149.
60. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 73.
61. Arrian I.16.1.
62. Diodorus Siculus XVII.19.6.
63. Arrian I.15.2–3.
64. *Ibid.*, I.14.6.
65. Devine, "A Pawn-Sacrifice at the Battle of the Granicus," pp. 10–13.
66. Arrian I.15.3.
67. *Ibid.*, I.15.3, 16.1.
68. Plutarch, *Alexander* 16.12; Polyacenus IV.3.16.
69. Plutarch, *Alexander* 16.
70. Arrian I.16.2.6.
71. Devine, "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," p. 276.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 277–278.
73. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 76.
74. Arrian II.7.1–2.
75. C. L. Murison, "Darius III and the Battle of Issus," *Historia* 21 (1972): 422–423.
76. A. Devine, "The Strategies of Alexander the Great and Darius III in the Issus Campaign (333 B.C.)," *The Ancient World* 12 (1985): 25–37.
77. Cf. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 99–101; A. Devine, "Grand Tactics at the Battle of Issus," *The Ancient World* 12 (1985): 45–46.
78. Arrian II.8.8. On the battle, see Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 98–102; Hammond, "Alexander's Charge at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C.," *Historia* 41 (1992): 394–406; Devine, "Grand Tactics at the Battle of Issus," pp. 39–59; Devine, "The Location of the Battlefield of Issus," *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 5 (1980): 3–10; Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary*, pp. 198–219; J. E. Atkinson, *A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Magni: Books 3 and 4* (Amsterdam, 1980), pp. 201–245, 470–476, 480–481; Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 199–203.
79. Arrian II.8.8.
80. *Ibid.*, II.8.7.
81. *Ibid.*, II.9.2.
82. *Ibid.*, II.9.4.
83. *Ibid.*, II.10.1. Recent scholarship has identified the Pinarus with the Payas River. On its course, see the conflicting views of Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 102, and Devine, "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," pp. 58–59.
84. *Ibid.*, II.9.1.
85. Devine, "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," pp. 49–50.
86. Arrian II.8.6.
87. Hammond, "Alexander's Charge at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C.," p. 403.
88. Arrian II.8.9–12.1–2.
89. *Ibid.*, II.10.3.
90. *Ibid.*, II.11.1.
91. *Ibid.*, II.10.4–7.
92. *Ibid.*, II.11.1.

93. Devine ("Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," pp. 51–52) bases his reconstruction mainly on Curtius (III.11.1), whom he considers more reliable than Arrian (II.11.2–3). Devine's reconstruction of the action on the left seems reasonable. However, he also argues that the action on the right was a "tame affair" (p. 52) and that the battle was won on the left. According to Devine, at Issus, as at Granicus, Alexander used a stratagem to force the Persian cavalry to attack the Greek allied cavalry in mass.

94. Arrian II.11.9–10.

95. *Ibid.*, II.11.6–7.

96. Devine, "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," p. 56.

97. Arrian II.8.3–4.

98. On Gaugamela, see A. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," *The Ancient World* 13 (1986): 87–115; Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 137–149; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, pp. 74–85; Marsden, *The Campaign of Gaugamela*; G. T. Griffith, "Alexander's Generalship at Gaugamela," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 67 (1947): 77–89; Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 206–211; A. R. Burn, "Notes on Alexander's Campaign, 332–330," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 72 (1952): 81–91; Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*, pp. 163–180.

99. Arrian III.8.6.

100. Marsden, *The Campaign of Gaugamela*, diagram II and pp. 24–39.

101. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," pp. 100–103.

102. Arrian III.12.5. Cf. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," p. 99.

103. Marsden, *The Campaign of Gaugamela*, p. 38.

104. Arrian III.13.4.

105. *Ibid.*, III.11.5.

106. *Ibid.*, III.11.3.

107. *Ibid.*, III.11.5–6.

108. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," p. 96.

109. Arrian III.12.1.

110. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," pp. 96–99, and his fig. 1 at p. 112.

111. Arrian III.13.1.

112. *Ibid.*, III.13.2.

113. *Ibid.*, III.13.2–4.

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*, III.13.5.

116. *Ibid.*, III.13.6.

117. *Ibid.*, III.14.3.

118. Arrian (III.14.5) mentions only Simmias's brigade, but since Craterus was deployed to the left of Simmias (III.11.9–10), it must have included his brigade too.

119. *Ibid.*, III.14.5.

120. *Ibid.*, III.14.6.

121. *Ibid.*, III.15.1.

122. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 146. Cf. Arrian III.15.2.
123. Arrian III.15.3.
124. Ibid., III.15.5.
125. Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," pp. 105–106.
126. Devine, "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," p. 26; Devine, "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," p. 55; Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela," p. 107. Cf. Hammond, "Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia," pp. 57–58; Arrian I.16.4, II.10.7, III.15.6; Diodorus Siculus XVII.36.6, XVII.61.31; Curtius Rufus III.11.27, IV.16.26.
127. Bosworth, "Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedon," pp. 1–12.
128. Arrian I.16.2, II.11.8, III.15.6.
129. Hammond, "Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia," pp. 59–62.
130. Devine, "Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus," p. 276; Devine, "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," p. 56; Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," p. 108.
131. Arrian II.9.3.
132. On the ratio of combatants to servants, see Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, pp. 11–14.
133. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 26.
134. Arrian II.10.6.
135. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, p. 119.
136. Frontinus 4.1.6.; Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, p. 12.
137. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, pp. 11–25.
138. Ibid., pp. 119–122.
139. On Alexander's leadership, see also J. Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (London, 1987), pp. 13–91.
140. See C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, bk. 1, ch. 3; cf. M. Howard, *Clausewitz* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 27–28.
141. Austin, "Alexander and the Macedonian Invasion of Asia," pp. 197–223.
142. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.12.
143. Justin, as quoted in Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*, p. 285.
144. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*, p. 285.
145. On this, see Devine's comments in "Great Tactics at the Battle of Issus," pp. 50–53; Devine, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," pp. 106–107.
146. Arrian I.13.3, 4.
147. Ibid., III.10.1–2.
148. Ibid., III.10.3.
149. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, p. 232.
150. Polybius X.13.1–5.
151. Garlan, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 146.
152. Arrian I.15.7.
153. Ibid., II.10.3.

154. Ibid., III.14.3.
155. Plutarch, *Alexander* 63.
156. Ibid.; Arrian VI.10.4.
157. Arrian II.14.
158. P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356–323 B.C.* (Harmondsworth, England 1974), pp. 333–336.
159. See, for instance, Bosworth's remarks in *Conquest and Empire*, p. 181, and in "Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedonia," especially pp. 1–2, 12.
160. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 253.
161. Ibid., pp. 14–15.
162. Ibid., pp. 67–68, 281–282; Arrian I.12.1.
163. Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, pp. 152–181.
164. P. Goukowsky, *Essai sur les origines du mythe d'Alexandre (336–270 av. J.-C.)*, vol. 1 (Nancy, France 1978), p. 69.
165. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 278–290; E. Badian, *The Deification of Alexander the Great: Protocol of the First Colloquy*, The Center of Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture (Berkeley, 1976), pp. 1–17. For an argument that Alexander had no desire to be deified, see G. L. Cawkwell, "The Deification of Alexander the Great: A Note," in I. Worthington, ed., *Ventures into Greek History* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 293–306.
166. Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, pp. 372–373.
167. Baldson, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," pp. 371–382.
168. Ibid., pp. 371–372.
169. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," pp. 3–5.
170. Baldson, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," p. 364.
171. Ibid., pp. 383–388.
172. Plutarch, *Alexander* 2–3.
173. Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, p. 269.
174. Quoted in ibid., p. 274.
175. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," pp. 10–11.
176. Ibid., p. 11.
177. Hammond, *Alexander the Great*, p. 287.
178. Goukowsky, *Essai sur les origines du mythe d'Alexandre*, vol. 1, pp. 69–70.
179. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," p. 3.
180. Goukowsky, *Essai sur les origines du mythe d'Alexandre*, vol. 1, p. 70.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid., p. 4.
183. Ibid.
184. Reported in E. N. Borza, "Significato politico, economico e sociale dell'impresa di Alessandro," in R. Bianchi Bandinelli, ed., *Storia e civiltà dei Greci*, vol. 5 (Milan, 1979), p. 167.

Chapter Six

1. P. Levêque, "La guerre à l'époque hellénistique," in J.-P. Vernant, ed., *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1968), pp. 265–266; Bosworth, "Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedonia," pp. 1–12.
2. Polybius V.82.6.

3. Arrian VII.23.3–4. Cf. Bosworth, “Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedonia,” pp. 3–4.

4. Cf. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*; Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World*.

5. Levêque, “La guerre à l’époque hellénistique,” pp. 265–266.

6. Ibid., p. 270.

7. Ibid., p. 274.

8. Ibid., pp. 276–279.

9. Ibid., pp. 266–274.

10. Ibid., pp. 271–274.

11. E. Gabba, *Republican Rome, the Army, and the Allies*, trans. P. J. Cuff (Berkeley, 1976; 1st Italian ed. 1973), p. 3.

12. Ibid., p. 2.

13. C. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, trans. P. S. Falla (London 1980; 1st French ed. 1976), pp. 17–60, 93.

14. Ibid., p. 94.

15. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*, p. 285.

16. W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979), p. 58.

17. Ibid., pp. 59–60.

18. Ibid., p. 60.

19. Gabba, *Republican Rome, the Army, and the Allies*, p. 11.

20. Ibid., pp. 2–11.

21. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 97.

22. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p. 47.

23. Ibid., pp. 12–17.

24. Ibid., pp. 17–20.

25. Ibid., pp. 50–53.

26. Ibid., p. 51.

27. A. H. Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars Against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” in W. Murray, M. Knox, and A. H. Bernstein, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, War* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 63.

28. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p. 51.

29. There is no agreement on the specifics of Roman arms and armor at this stage of history. My interpretation offers a general view.

30. My description of the legion is based on the assumption that Polybius’s depiction of the legion in the middle of the second century B.C. mirrored conditions already existing on the eve of the Second Punic War. On this, see Polybius VI.19–25. For a description of an earlier stage in the development of the legion, see Livy VIII.8.3–14.

31. Polybius VI.22.

32. Ibid., VI.21.9.

33. Ibid., VI.23.5.

34. P. Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981), pp. 53, 131.

35. Polybius VI.23.2.

36. Polybius VI.23.

37. Polybius VI.23.16.

38. Livy VIII.8.3.

39. Polybius VI.24.
40. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, pt. 4, pp. 46–51.
41. On the deployment of lines, see F. E. Adcock, *The Roman Art of War Under the Republic* (Cambridge, 1981; 1st ed. 1940), pp. 8–13.
42. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, p. 275.
43. Livy VIII.8.10.
44. Polybius VI.42.
45. Ibid., VI.27–42.
46. Ibid., VI.24.1–2.
47. Ibid., VI.24.6.
48. A. du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle*, trans. J. N. Greely and R. C. Cotton (Harrisburg, Pa., 1958), p. 39.
49. Ibid., pp. 40–41.
50. Ibid., p. 51.
51. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 106.
52. Polybius VI.36–37.
53. Livy VIII.6–8.
54. Polybius VI.37.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., except for the infraction in the case of improper scouting, which is taken from VIII.6–8.
57. Polybius VI.37.4.
58. Ibid., VI.38.
59. Livy VIII.6–7.
60. Ibid., VIII.7.14.
61. Ibid., VIII.7.17.
62. Ibid., VIII.8.1.
63. Polybius VI.37. See also Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 109.
64. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 106.
65. Polybius VI.39.
66. Ibid., VI.39.1–11.
67. du Picq, *Battle Studies*, p. 51.
68. Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, p. 273.
69. du Picq, *Battle Studies*, p. 54.
70. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.1.8.
71. du Picq, *Battle Studies*, pp. 50–55.
72. Livy X.1.4., in Stephen Oakley, “The Roman Conquest of Italy,” in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Roman World* (London, 1993), p. 16.
73. Ibid., pp. 18–22.
74. Ibid., pp. 24–25.
75. Ibid., p. 12, based on Beloch, *Römische Geschichte bis zum Beginn der punischen Kriege*, pp. 620–621.
76. Ibid., p. 19.
77. J. Patterson, “Military Organization and Social Change in the Later Roman Republic,” in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Roman World* (London, 1993), p. 100.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101: At the Latin colony of Bononia (189 B.C.), the equites received 70 iugera, and the other ranks received 50. At Thurii in 193 B.C., the grants were 40 iugera for equites and 20 iugera for pedites.

79. E. Gabba, “Riflessione sulla società romana fra il III e il II secolo a.C.,” *Athenaeum*, n.s. 64 (1986): 472–473.

80. Patterson, “Military Organization and Social Change in the Later Roman Republic,” pp. 97–99.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

82. T. Frank, *Roman Imperialism* (New York, 1914), pp. 33–34. Cf. Oakley, “The Roman Conquest of Italy,” p. 32.

83. V. Ilari, *Gli italici nelle strutture militari romane* (Milan, 1974), pp. 146–185.

84. On this, see the discussion in Oakley, “The Roman Conquest of Italy,” pp. 14–18.

85. Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars Against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” p. 57.

86. F. W. Walbank, *Philip V of Macedon* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 289–290.

87. Polybius XVIII.28.4.

88. For the figures on the two armies, see Livy XXXIII.4.6 and the discussion in F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1967), pp. 584–585. On the battle’s location, see W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography* (Berkeley, 1965–1993), pt. 2, pp. 133–144. On the battle, see N.G.L. Hammond, “The Campaign and the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C.,” pp. 60–82.

89. See Polybius XVIII.20.7 on the mist and 22.9 on the terrain.

90. *Ibid.*, XVIII.21.1–3.

91. *Ibid.*, XVIII.21.4–8.

92. *Ibid.*, XVIII.22.1–4.

93. *Ibid.*, XVIII.22.7.

94. *Ibid.*, XVIII.22.8–10.

95. *Ibid.*, XVIII.22.9–10.

96. *Ibid.*, XVIII.22.1.

97. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.1 and XVIII.25–26.

98. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.6.

99. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.

100. *Ibid.*, XVIII.25.1–3.

101. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.4–5.

102. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.6.

103. *Ibid.*, XVIII.24.7.

104. On this, see also G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 4, pt. 1, *La fondazione dell'impero* (Florence, 1968), pp. 80–81.

105. Polybius XVIII.26.1–3.

106. Polybius (*ibid.*) does not specify that the relieving force came from the principes and the triarii, but it is likely that they did, if one considers the Romans’ deployment and the outcome of the fight on their right; cf. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 2, p. 584.

107. Polybius XVIII.26.4–5.

108. *Ibid.*, XVIII.26.7.

109. *Ibid.*, XVIII.26.6–8.

110. Ibid., XVIII.26.9–12.
111. Livy XXXIII.10.8.
112. Ibid., XVIII.25.2.
113. Ibid., XVIII.30.11.
114. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 2, pp. 158, 162; Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 13.5, in *Vitae*; and N.G.L. Hammond, "The Battle of Pydna," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 39–40, on the Macedonians.
115. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 16.5. On the terrain, cf. the contrasting views of Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, pt. 2, pp. 145–163, and Hammond, "The Battle of Pydna," pp. 31–47. My reconstruction of the battle follows Livy and Plutarch as reflected generally in Hammond.
116. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 19.1.
117. Polybius (XVIII.30.5–10) says there were 10 phalangites against 1 Roman.
118. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 19.2.
119. Ibid., 20.1.
120. Livy XXXIV.46.10–13. Cf. A. D. Lee, "Morale and the Roman Experience of Battle," in A. B. Lloyd, ed., *Battle in Antiquity* (Chippenham, 1996), pp. 208–209.
121. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 20.2.
122. Ibid., 20.3; Hammond, "The Battle of Pydna," p. 46.
123. Polybius XVIII.31.2.
124. Ibid., XVIII.31.6–7.
125. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 16.5.
126. The other reasons, mentioned by Polybius (XVII.25.5), were the lack of orders and the order of march.
127. Ibid.
128. The coordinated attack of the Roman elephants and cavalry suggests that the Roman horses had been trained to attack in cooperation with elephants. Normally, the presence of elephants would terrify horses.
129. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 20.4–5.
130. Hammond, "The Battle of Pydna," p. 46.
131. Ibid., pp. 39, 41, 46–47.
132. Polybius XVIII.24.9.
133. Ibid., XVIII.24.10.
134. Ibid., XVIII.25.4.
135. Ibid., XVIII.32.4.
136. Ibid., XVIII.32.10.
137. Ibid., XVIII.32.9–11.
138. Ibid., XVIII.26.
139. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 20.
140. Polybius XVIII.26.6–7.
141. Hammond, "The Battle of Pydna," p. 47.
142. Ibid., XVIII.25.4.
143. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 2, p. 584. Cf. Polybius XVIII.26.2.
144. Polybius XVIII.31.8.
145. Ibid., XVIII.31.10.

146. Ibid., XVIII.31–32.
147. Walbank, *Philip V*, pp. 289–290.
148. Polybius XVIII.28.10–11.
149. Walbank, *Philip V*, p. 289.
150. Moretti, “Nascita e struttura dello stato macedone,” in R. Bianchi Bandinello, ed., *Storia e civiltà dei Greci*, vol. 5 (Milan, 1979), p. 91.
151. G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, *L'età delle guerre puniche* (Florence, 1968), pp. 9–10.
152. Polybius IX.24.6.
153. Ibid., III.11.
154. On the causes of and responsibility for the outbreak of the war, see Kagan's discussion in *On the Origins of the War and the Preservation of Peace*, pp. 232–280.
155. Ibid., p. 255.
156. A. H. Bernstein thinks otherwise. According to Bernstein, Hannibal did not intend to be on the defensive in Spain or Africa. From the beginning, he planned to attack Rome on the Italian peninsula. See Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars Against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” p. 77.
157. B. Craven, *The Punic Wars* (London, 1980), p. 101.
158. For the chronology of the Second Punic War, see De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 663–671.
159. Polybius III.35.7.
160. Ibid., III.56.1–6.
161. S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, vol. 2 (Osnabruck, Germany, 1972; 1st ed. 1913), pp. 344–352.
162. Ibid., p. 397.
163. Ibid., p. 374.
164. Ibid., pp. 350–390.
165. Ibid., pp. 373–390.
166. Ibid., pp. 365–366.
167. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 663.
168. My battle account is based on Polybius III.65, and Livy XXI.45–47.
169. I am assuming that the Carthaginians deployed the full contingent of 6,000 horsemen, which they had after crossing the Alps (Polybius III.56), and that the Roman contingent represented about half of all the horsemen available at the battle of Trebia River (Polybius III.72). At Ticinus, the army at Scipio's disposal was about half what it would be at Trebia.
170. Polybius X.3; Livy XXI.46.
171. Polybius III.68.9–11; Livy XXI.47.
172. Polybius III.68.
173. For Trebia, I have followed Polybius III.69–76. For a sample of the secondary literature, see De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 30–32, 90–96; J. F. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War: A Military History of the Second Punic War* (Warminster, England, 1978), pp. 55–58.
174. Polybius, III.69–70.
175. Ibid., III.71.6–9.
176. Ibid.

177. Ibid., III.71.10–11.
178. Ibid., III.72.3. On the Roman diet, see I. Gozzini Giacosa, *A Taste of Ancient Rome*, trans. A. Herklotz (Chicago, 1992; 1st Italian ed. 1986), pp. 2–3. According to Giacosa, the *ientaculum* was “a fairly rich breakfast” that included normally leftovers from the previous evening: “olives, capers, eggs, a bit of cheese and bread, honey” (p. 2).
179. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 664.
180. Polybius III.72.4.
181. Ibid., III.71.11, 72.5–6.
182. Ibid., III.72.12–13.
183. Ibid., III.72.8–9.
184. Ibid., III.72.9.
185. Ibid., III.73.1–3.
186. Ibid., III.73.4–7.
187. Ibid., III.73.7.
188. Ibid., III.74.1.
189. Ibid., III.74.2.
190. Ibid., III.74.3–6.
191. Ibid., III.74.7–8.
192. Ibid., III.74.9–11.
193. Ibid., III.69.12.
194. Ibid., III.78.7.
195. Ibid., III.84.7. Cf. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 219–220.
196. Polybius III.110ff.
197. Ibid., III.113.5.
198. Ibid., III.114.5.
199. Ibid., III.113.1–5. My reconstruction of the battle is based mainly on Polybius. As an introduction to the vast secondary literature, see De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 60–63, 126–159; J. F. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, pp. 75–85.
200. Ibid., III.113.6–9.
201. Ibid., III.113.6–9; 114.
202. Ibid., III.115.2–4.
203. Ibid., III.116.5.
204. Ibid., III.116.6–7.
205. Ibid., III.115.
206. Ibid., III.116.7–11.
207. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 62.
208. Polybius III.117; De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 62–63, 126–130.
209. Polybius III.75.8.
210. Ibid., XI.1–3.
211. G. Giannelli, *Roma nell' età delle guerre puniche* (Bologna, 1938), pp. 214, 251.
212. Polybius III.85.4.
213. For most of the arguments cited in the text on Hannibal's strategy, see J. P. Brisson, “Les mutations de la deuxième guerre punique,” in J. P. Brisson, ed., *Prob-*

lèmes de la guerre à Rome (Paris, 1969), pp. 33–60. Cf. Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars Against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” pp. 56–84.

214. C. Nicolet, “Les guerres puniques,” in Nicolet et al., *Rome et la conquête du monde méditerranéen 264–27 avant d.-c.*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1978), pp. 612–613.

215. Polybius III.117.

216. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 111.

217. Ibid. The ability to absorb large casualties was one of the factors in Rome’s success, according to Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” pp. 56–84.

218. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, p. 111.

219. Ibid.

220. Ibid., p. 112.

221. Ibid.

222. Bernstein, “The Strategy of a Warrior-State: Rome and the Wars Against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.,” pp. 61–62.

223. Ibid., p. 63; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 39–40.

224. L. Laurenzi, “Perché Annibale non assediò Roma,” *Studi annibali*, Atti del convegno svoltosi a Cortona, Tuoro sul Trasimeno, Perugia, October 1961 (Cortona, 1964), pp. 141–152.

225. Polybius (VI.25) is referring to Rome’s adoption of Greek arms, but it is also a principle that the Romans seem to have adopted in all their actions.

226. On the young Scipio, see H. H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician* (Ithaca, 1970), pp. 11–38.

227. See Polybius X.6.16 on New Carthage and X.38.40 on Baecula.

228. For Ilipa, I have followed Livy XXVIII.13–15 as interpreted by Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician*, pp. 86–95.

229. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician*, pp. 88–89.

230. Livy XXVIII.14.1–6.

231. Ibid., XXVIII.14.7.

232. Ibid., XXVIII.14.7.8, 15.2.

233. Ibid., XXVIII.14.8–9.

234. Ibid., XXVIII.15.3–4.

235. Ibid., XXVIII.14.13.

236. Ibid., XXVIII.14–20.

237. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician*, pp. 92–93.

238. Ibid., p. 95.

239. Ibid., pp. 94–95.

240. For Scipio’s African campaign, see De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 502–544, 562–572.

241. Livy XXIX.34.

242. Cf. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician*, pp. 123–127.

243. Ibid., pp. 128–132; also Lazenby, *Hannibal’s War*, pp. 209–211.

244. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician*, pp. 130–131.

245. Polybius XV.5.1.

246. Ibid., XV.5.4–7.

247. Ibid., XV.5.8.

248. Ibid., XV.5.8–10.

249. Ibid., XV.5.12–13.

250. I am accepting De Sanctis's calculations in *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 579–582.

251. Polybius., XV.6.3.

252. Ibid., XV.6.4–8.14.

253. De Sanctis, *Storia dei romani*, vol. 3, pt. 2; p. 871. On the battle, see *ibid.*, pp. 536–549, 572–598; Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, pp. 219–225; V. Manfredi, "Aspetti della tradizione storiografica sulla battaglia di Naraggara," in Marta Sordi, ed., *Storiografia e propaganda* (Milan, 1975), pp. 82–94.

254. Polybius XV.10.1.

255. Ibid., XV.10.2–7. Scipio's speech, like Hannibal's speech, should not be understood as just a rhetorical device employed by Polybius. Certainly, it would have been impossible for a general to address 40,000 troops, but it is conceivable that he could speak to a gathering of the main and secondary leaders of the army.

256. Ibid., XV.11.8.

257. Ibid., XV.11.8–9.

258. Ibid., XV.11.9–12.

259. Ibid., XV.11.1, 16.1.

260. Ibid., XV.11.2, 16.3.

261. Ibid.

262. Ibid., XV.11.2.

263. Ibid., XV.16.4.

264. Ibid., XV.16.

265. Ibid., XV.12.

266. Ibid., III.114.1–3.

267. Ibid., XV.14.

268. Ibid., XV.9.9–10, 12.1–7.

269. Polybius (XV.12.7) mentions that only the Carthaginian third line remained behind, but the subsequent course of the battle suggests that the Roman triarii stayed behind as well.

270. Ibid., XV.13.1–2.

271. Ibid., XV.13.3.

272. Ibid.

273. Ibid., XV.13.7–8.

274. Ibid., XV.13.9–10.

275. Ibid., XV.14.6.

276. Ibid., XV.14.1–2.

277. Ibid., XV.14.3–5.

278. Ibid., XV.14.6–8.

279. Ibid., XV.14.9.

280. Jaczynowska, "La genesi repubblicana del culto imperiale," pp. 285–295.

281. Seguin, "La religion de Scipion l'Africain," pp. 3–21.

282. Besides Seguin's article, see also Gabba, "P. Cornelio Scipione Africano e la leggenda," pp. 3–17.

283. Seguin, "La religion de Scipion l'Africain," p. 7.

284. Livy XXII.53.11.

285. Ibid., XXVIII.38.8.

286. *Ibid.*, XXVIII.39.15.
287. Cf. Polybius's version (X.9–16) with Livy's account (XXVI.42–48).
288. Livy XXVII.19.4.
289. Jaczynowska, "La genesi repubblicana del culto imperiale," p. 287.
290. Seguin, "La religion de Scipion l'Africain," pp. 11–12.
291. On this, see *ibid.*, pp. 17–18; Gabba, "P. Cornelio Scipione Africano e la leggenda," p. 11; Jaczynowska, "La genesi repubblicana del culto imperiale," pp. 289–290.

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About the Book and Author

In this comprehensive overview of ancient warfare, Antonio Santosuosso explores how the tactical and strategic concepts of warfare changed between the beginning of the fifth century B.C. and the middle of the second century B.C. and why the West—Greece, Macedonia, and Rome—triumphed over the East—understood geographically as Persia or ideologically as Carthage. He also shows how the role of warrior related to the role of citizen and how the symbols and propaganda stemming from war emphasized and promoted the values of Western societies.

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